THE YEAR IN REVIEW: 2016, MERCIFULLY OVER

CAR AND DRIVER

JAN/2017

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THE BATTLE FOR

10Best Cars of 2017

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PLUS 10BEST CONCEPTS, TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN DETAILS, AND MORE!

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A SIMPLE GESTURE

THAT DEFIES A MILLENNIUM
OF EVOLUTION

BECAUSE, AT ITS HEART,
LIES A VERY N

GENESIS

We didn't just build a brand to be number one. We built one to ma
offering you command of the road with the G90's 365-hp, 3.3L twin tu
In a world scrambling to put itself first, respect is a breath of fresh

Optional features shown. *420-hp rating with premium fuel only.

OBLE,
BUT VERY FOREIGN
NOTION
"YOU BEFORE ME"
AND WITH THAT
WE SAY AGAIN,
AFTER
ke sure you were. An experience that begins by
urbo, or the available 420-hp*, 5.0L V8 of the G80.
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On the Cover

These two cars might just be on the 2017 10Best list.
photography by John Roe

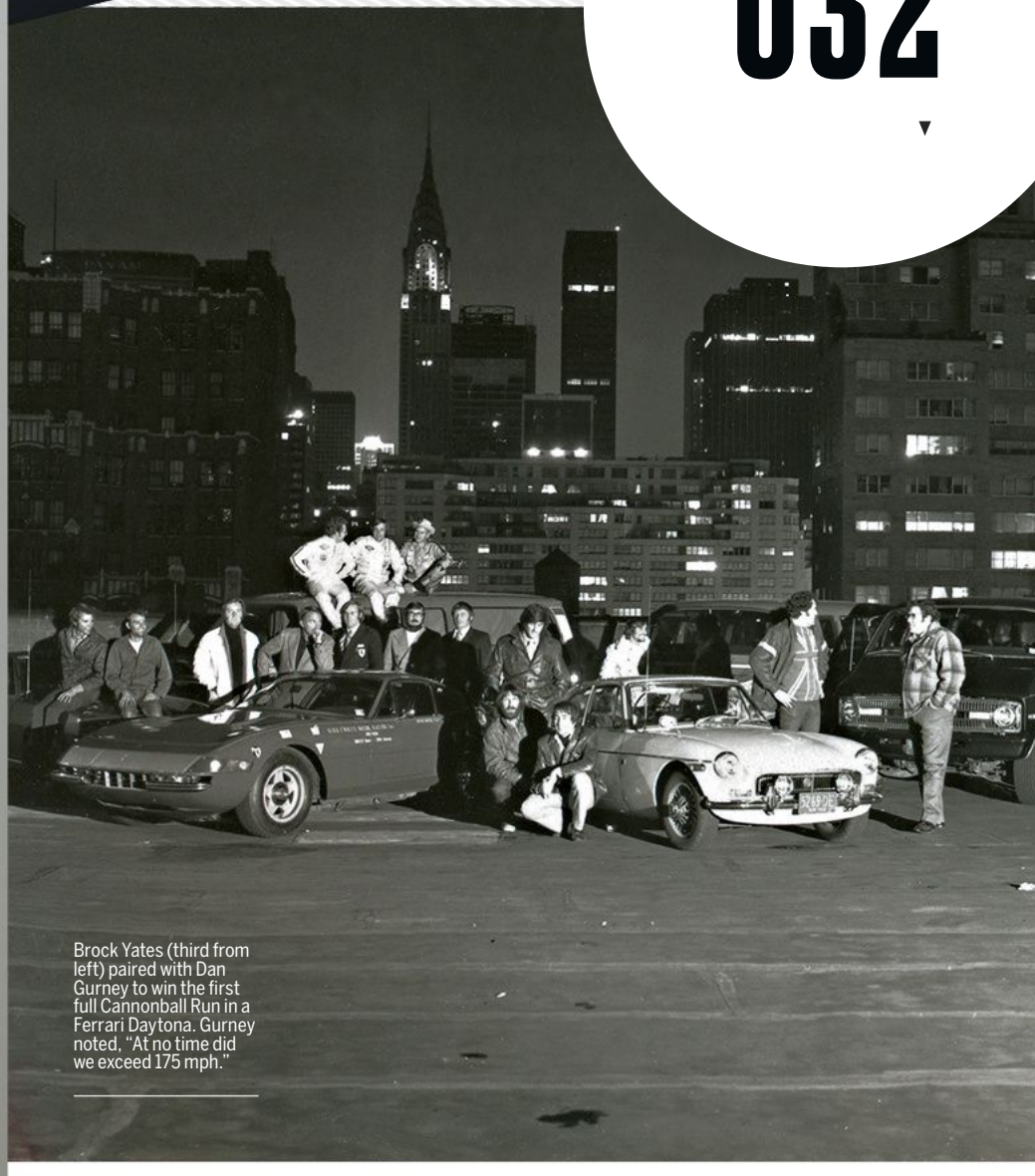
Car and Driver. vol. 62, no. 7

In this Issue:

"He was a lifelong student of the English language, and his sense of humor bubbled warmly, even when circumstances were grim."

—JOHN PHILLIPS, "BROCK YATES (1933–2016)"

032



Brock Yates (third from left) paired with Dan Gurney to win the first full Cannonball Run in a Ferrari Daytona. Gurney noted, "At no time did we exceed 175 mph."

HERE'S THE STORY OF THE ALL-ELECTRIC

2017 BOLT EV

FROM THE ENGINEER AND DESIGNER WHO HAVE CHANGED THE CONVERSATION ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES.

We sat down with Bolt EV Executive Chief Engineer Pamela Fletcher and Chief Designer Stuart Norris to find out how they created the first affordable electric vehicle offering a 238-mile range!

Preproduction model shown throughout. Production model may vary.

PAMELA FLETCHER

CHEVROLET EXECUTIVE CHIEF ENGINEER,
ELECTRIFIED VEHICLES

How did Chevrolet beat every other car company to offer the first affordable electric vehicle with a 238-mile range?

It was a combination of experience and expertise that led to this vehicle. We gathered learnings from the previous generations of Volt and Spark EV, and built a completely new, affordable electric vehicle that had a perfect combination of range, utility and style. And it had to be fun to drive. In the process we took a much bigger look at the future. The engineering and design teams worked through three other different electric vehicle designs before arriving at the Bolt EV. We knew it had to be a phenomenal vehicle that happened to be electric — and it had to be easy to charge. So we offer available DC Fast Charging capability. Bolt EV will change people's perceptions of driving an electric vehicle.

How was your team able to offer 238 miles of range?

People want range in an electric vehicle. To offer 238 miles[1] on a full charge, the battery had to be redesigned in several major ways. We changed the basic construction of the battery cell, the format of how the cells are arranged together, and re-architected how everything is packaged. The battery is an integral part of the driving dynamics and interior packaging. The flat battery allows a flat load floor and easy entry and exit. To build confidence even further, we've provided three ways to charge the vehicle. With the available 240-volt/32-amp charger,[2] charging your Bolt EV is as easy as plugging in your cell phone. And when you consider that the average American drives roughly 40 miles each day, the available range of 238 miles means Bolt EV has plenty of range to handle your daily routine and additional side trips. We've worked to eliminate excuses to not buy an electric vehicle.

> *"We've worked to eliminate excuses to not buy an electric vehicle."*
>
> *Pamela Fletcher*
> CHEVROLET EXECUTIVE CHIEF ENGINEER, ELECTRIFIED VEHICLES

STUART NORRIS

CHEVROLET MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DESIGN

What were your goals when you were designing the Bolt EV?

We wanted to design a great-looking car with a premium feel that just happened to be electric. We achieved this from the inside out. The very low beltline improves visibility and creates a spacious interior, especially up front. We created a floating dash and console and pushed the wheels out to the corners to maximize interior space. There's a fresh approach both in the proportions and the surface language, which you can see in details like the lamps, the grilles, and in the unique rear-end execution. Some electric vehicles feel delicate, so we wanted our vehicle to have a feeling of strength. Bolt EV has distinctive proportions and it completely comes alive when it's on the road, which is the ultimate test of every car design.

When designing the interior, were there any specific considerations built around Bolt EV technology?

The Bolt EV touch-screen is the size of a tablet and acts as the nerve center for the dash. The user interface is very approachable and intuitive. It was important that gauge design and layout were easy to understand. For example, the Confidence Gauge provides at-a-glance, real-time information so you don't have to think about range. You can monitor patterns in your daily commute and how your driving style and factors like terrain and temperature are having an impact on efficiency. And you should see what happens when it goes from day to night. We kept the signature Chevrolet dual cockpit interior, tweaked it for optimal usability and balanced it with very strong symmetry throughout the rest of the vehicle.

CHEVROLET
FIND NEW ROADS

1 Based on all-electric vehicles in the market as of October 2016. EPA-estimated 238-mile EV range. Your actual range may vary based on several factors including temperature, terrain and driving technique. Limited availability beginning late 2016 in select markets. 2 Professional installation required.

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vol. 62, no. 7

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Backfires:
The joyful noise of the commentariat, rebutted sporadically by Ed.

TRACK TIME

In Lightning Lap 10 [October 2016], you claimed that "the 488's 661 stallions went through the gears like a 1.0-liter sport bike." Next year why not see if this is, indeed, true. *C/D* opened my eyes to the awesome performance of motorcycles in the early '80s. Why not use the next LL as a forum to once again benchmark today's fastest stock motorcycle against the automotive state of the art? Please pick someone other than Phillips to pilot the bike; I enjoy reading his columns.

—JPN
Doylestown, PA

How did you calculate the Chevy Corvette Grand Sport's price in the Lightning Lap article? It says it has a base price of $79,930 and with options it came to $92,060. But Chevy's website says that the base price of the Grand Sport is $65,450. Why the huge discrepancy?

—Andrew Cogan
Round Rock, TX

In Lightning Lap, the base price always includes the performance options necessary to achieve the lap time. We ran a Grand Sport with the Z07 Performance package ($7995), competition seats ($2495), and the carbon-fiber ground-effects package ($2995), and we always include the destination charge ($995 in this case). Think of the Lightning Lap base price as the least expensive way to recreate the performance—Ed.

As a former professional motorcycle racer, current Audi high-performance driving instructor with the R8 program, current professional stuntman and stunt driver for motion pictures and television, former editor for motorcycle print and online magazines, and general speedy-vehicle enthusiast, I'm curious. Do you use the same (your fastest) driver to extract each car's flyer lap?

—Chris Tardieu
Playa del Rey, CA

We use multiple editors. Each is assigned about six cars, and if a lap time doesn't seem up to speed, we then put a different driver in the car to see if the time can be improved. No matter who is lapping, times are usually within a couple tenths of a second—Ed.

DODGE VIPER GOES OUT WITH A BANG! PG.54
CAR AND DRIVER
The Ultimate Test of Performance
LIGHTNING LAP #10: 2016'S FASTEST STREET CARS ON AMERICA'S TOUGHEST TRACK
LEADING OFF:
ACURA NSX
PORSCHE CAYMAN GT4
DODGE CHARGER SRT HELLCAT
JAGUAR F-TYPE PROJECT 7

"I DON'T KNOW WHO WROTE THE PIECE ON THE DODGE CHARGER SRT HELLCAT IN OCTOBER'S LIGHTNING LAP ARTICLE. HOWEVER, WHOEVER DID DESERVES A RAISE, OR A PULITZER."

Greatly enjoyed your Lightning Lap article from the October issue with your comparisons of many new cars. "The Final Countdown" featured more than 200 lap times and almost as many vehicles. On reading the list, I was most surprised that Aston Martin couldn't make the grade. With its entire racing heritage, I am surprised that it could not even beat a Honda or a Mazda.

—Terry Taylor
Houston, TX

Aston gets our invites, but it has yet to send a car—Ed.

I don't know who wrote the piece on the Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat in October's Lightning Lap article. However, whoever did deserves a raise, or a Pulitzer. Heck, even a jelly-filled doughnut on Wednesday will do. Masterful in its honesty and straightforwardness, it had me laughing more on the throne than I have in a long time when the mental picture of "the Hulk in Gucci pumps" hit. Well

done. Keep up the irreverence and the amazing writing.

—Matt Taylor
Virginia Beach, VA

Your description of the BMW M2, "Never upset by curbing and always easily placed," seems out of place somehow with previous negatives on electrically driven steering.

—John B.
St. Louis, MO

It's all about the feel, B—Ed.

LL times less than half a second apart. Imagining the Ford Focus RS nipping at the heels of the big bad Charger Hellcat made me chuckle.

—Lauritz Goodrich
Neenah, WI

"Spiderman" on vacation? Searched high and low for "spider graphs" of "dollars per second" lap times at VIR. You could put all the cars on one small graph to keep readers occupied until the next issue, but to be fair, make it centerfold-sized with the staple as "zero." "Dollars per g of lateral grip" would also be informative (even though highly tire-choice dependent), not to mention "weight in pounds as equipped per second" of lap times. And, while "Spiderman" is playing with the spreadsheet, "seconds per horsepower." He could end with a "spiderweb" of "font size vs. readership lost." I've been a subscriber since you started using movable type, and the "whom-to-yell-at" page's font is smaller now.

—Gary Singer
Albuquerque, NM

That letter was harder to follow than a spider graph—Ed.

In the October issue, the Tesla Model S was driven around VIR with the battery protectors on to limit the high heat generated by converting DC to AC from damaging the battery. After reading the article, I was watching a Formula E race (F1 with the sound turned off). How does FE deal with the heat issue?

—Bill Tatgenhorst
Wellington, FL

See Explained—Ed.

The annual Lightning Lap is my favorite *C/D* issue. I'd love to see some vintage cars included in the competition to compare with today's speedsters. 1969 Camaro COPO, 1967 Corvette 427, Mustang GT, etc.

—Max Weaver
Kingwood, TX

Lightning Lap is a great way of comparing cars' track performances regardless of price. And you can clearly see the various cars' performance improvements over the years. I do, however, feel that allowing the base price for the 2017 Camaro 1LE V-6 to dominate your LL1 group is a little misleading. The LL1 group is for cars costing less than $35,000. The base price for a regular 2017 V-6 Camaro is $34,495, which is just $504 under the maximum for the LL1. The Camaro 1LE V-6 costs a total of $43,185, almost $9K more than the base model. Considering that the 1LE is a "bona fide track package" that cost $4500, I submit that this car should have been considered as a stand-alone variant similar to the way the Ford GT350R is

"I'D LOVE TO SEE SOME VINTAGE CARS INCLUDED IN THE COMPETITION TO COMPARE WITH TODAY'S SPEEDSTERS."

◄

Explained: Battery Thermal Management

Excess heat degrades the electrodes in a lithium-ion battery, reducing the amount of energy the pack can store over the long term. Tesla's warranty covers battery packs for eight years, while a Formula E pack is designed to last one season. Given that each driver has two cars in Formula E (racers switch into a second fully charged car midway through each 50-minute competition), that's roughly 20 hours of hard use over the course of the year, including practice and qualifying.

The Formula E battery—165 liquid-cooled pouch-type cells—is fundamentally similar to that of many production EVs, but the cooling strategy differs significantly. For production cars, engineers aim to operate the lithium-ion battery at about 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Williams Advanced Engineering, which supplies the packs for Formula E, allows a cell to peak around 135 degrees before the battery-management system begins to limit the power output of the pack. The radiators and the cooling circuits are specifically designed so that, even in the hottest races in South America and Asia, the cars won't approach that temperature until the battery nears depletion.

It's also worth noting that the 5010-pound Model S generates a lot more power (and thus heat) lapping a track than a 2000-pound Formula E race car. Our long-term 85-kWh Model S has a peak output of 463 horsepower, while the 30-kWh Formula E car is limited to 228 horsepower during races, with brief boosts to 268 horses. —*Eric Tingwall*

considered a stand-alone track car and not just a highly optioned base Mustang GT. The 2017 Camaro 1LE V-6 should have been in the LL2 Group.

—Kent Lewis
Kennesaw, GA

Wrong, Lewis. The V-6–powered Camaro 1LE with the performance options necessary to turn a 3:04.0 costs $34,495. The as-tested price of the 1LE in the story rose to $43,185 because of luxury equipment that didn't help the lap time—Ed.

FOUR ANGRY MEN

Your review of the Honda Ridgeline ["O Ca-na-da!" October 2016] starts with a totally gratuitous swipe at Donald Trump. In jest or not, I can see no reason for a car publication to engage in political commentary unrelated to cars. Some years ago I was a subscriber and found many snarky comments about Sarah Palin in your publication as well. (There is a common theme running through *C/D*.) This apparently is part of *C/D*'s content policy. While I think that it makes no business/editorial sense to do so, *C/D* has a right to continue its back-handed political digs. I also have a right to not renew my subscription. There are too many automotive publications out there where I can get my information.

—Ron Ziotkowski
Burleson, TX

Gentlemen, please cancel my subscription to *Car and Driver*. I do not want to see or read about lib indoctrination in a car magazine. David E. Davis Jr. would be turning over in his grave if he read this disgusting lib crap!

—David Blakeney
Fort Worth, TX

I thought this was an auto magazine, not a place for political statements. Perhaps Jeff Sabatini should be transferred to Canada since he thinks it is such a great place. He could then live alongside Whoopi Goldberg, Cher, Jon Stewart, Miley Cyrus, Lena Dunham, Raven-Symoné, and other "significant" people if Trump wins the White House.

—J. Bridges
Houston, TX

That'd be so Raven—Ed.

I am mad. The article on the Ridgeline was good; what I am mad about is all the innuendoes on Canada and the unfavorable remarks about the U.S. I hope the author already lives there or packs up and moves there, and he can take any person who doesn't stand up for our flag with him.

He earns his living writing articles about vehicles sold and made in the U.S. (The Ridgeline is made in Georgia.) ***[Actually, the Ridgeline is made in Alabama—Ed.]*** I don't appreciate it one bit; this is my country, I served in two wars defending this country, and it looks like I still must stand up and speak up for it.

He has a right to speak his mind, but so do I. However it is my money and I do not need to buy or subscribe to a magazine that publishes articles like this, especially in the same month as 9/11!

—William Meyer
Biglerville, PA

MAGIC WAGONS

When I came across the story on the 1984 Plymouth Voyager and saw the driving position ["Voyager to the Pacifica," October 2016], I was amazed at how roomy and well laid out the van was. Seems like almost all new cars are so crowded and dark in the front seat now. I have been shopping for a new SUV, but every one I try has a huge chunk of plastic between the seats. I just want a simple vehicle with as few options as possible.

—Tom Worth
Enid, OK

Just dropping you a note to say how much I loved the article comparing the 1984 Voyager to the new Chrysler Pacifica. Not that I really love reading about minivans or anything, but it brought back a lot of memories.

Back in 1990, my high-school best friend and I would load up his mom's Voyager for ski trips and haul ass on the Pennsylvania Turnpike up to the Pocono Mountains. The trip home was always kind of surreal, stupid, and dangerous. We would leave late at night when the road was empty. With absolute blackness all around us and almost no other cars to worry about, we'd drive the two hours back to Philly at warp speed, with the 85-mph speedo pinned. It buzzed, it shook, and it shifted lanes when the wind blew, but we kept it pinned. We were sure that poor grocery grabber was going to catastrophically break and either kill us or leave us stranded on the bleak moonscape of the turnpike north of Allentown, but that old van took everything we could throw at it. I drove a Mustang GT at the time and managed some fun/stupid feats as well, but none quite like charging hammer-down into the black void with no idea how fast you were going—in a Voyager. Who says minivans can't be exhilarating? Not this guy.

—Bryan Bell
Havertown, PA

Your Plymouth Voyager and Chrysler Pacifica comparison brought back fond memories of a 1988 Voyager we used for hauling the kids and occasionally pulling a camper to Florida. It was roomy, comfortable, and dependable. The best thing, though, was that it had a five-speed manual transmission, which was needed to wring everything I could out of the 100-hp 2.5-liter four. It's hard to imagine any manufacturer offering a manual van today. Of course, I haven't bought a van since.

—Randy Peterson
Auburn, IN

In the future, please make it possible for us armchair editors to easily and effectively purge our monthly issue of stuff that should never be included in a magazine called *Car and Driver*. I'm specifically referring to the six pages titled "Voyager to the Pacifica." Articles

VOYAGER TO THE PACIFICA
Chrysler's revolutionary 1984 minivan casts a spell on the evolutionary 2017 Pacifica.
by John Pearley Huffman
photography by Marc Urbano

▲ **"WHO SAYS MINIVANS CAN'T BE EXHILARATING? NOT THIS GUY."**

Letter of the Month:

Dear John Phillips,
I believe your beard has been getting out at night and killing my chickens.

—Matt Abraham
Parkland, FL

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covering an '80s minivan (any minivan) are a waste of valuable resources (trees), and while I so wanted to rip it from my issue, it shared a page with the excellent Mazda 3 long-term test. Perforated page tear-outs would also be appreciated.

—Mark Reichow
Lodi, WI

In your test of the Pacifica, did you make any conclusions about road noise?

—Ken Kutz
Minneapolis, MN

We're against it—Ed.

UP, UP, AND AWAY

It would be malpractice for Cadillac not to produce the Escala ["Upscala," October 2016].

—M. Williams
Cleveland, OH

The Escala concept is a beautiful car, but I won't consider buying a Cadillac until it brings back a knob for the radio. Did Cadillac forget that humans have opposable thumbs?

—Tom Tucker
Bloomfield Hills, MI

We remind them constantly—Ed.

DB GOES TO 11

As an American Muslim living in the age of ISIS and Trump, I long abandoned the morning news, opting instead for *Car and Driver* with my morning coffee. Imagine my surprise, then, when during another depressing news cycle, with an incident in New York City, I encountered "*Inshallah*" in Aaron Robinson's Aston Martin DB11 review ["A Nearly Perfect Dozen," October 2016]. I had to read that line and the preceding and following text multiple times to make sure I wasn't seeing things. And while I could write an entire essay describing the various thoughts and emotions invoked by this simple word appearing in a magazine I've loved since I was a child, I will instead opt for one word that I believe sums it all up perfectly: *mashallah*.

—Talha Najeeb
San Diego, CA

THE FRANCO FILES

The French have gorgeous women, beautiful clothing designers, and amazing accessories, but they lack attractive, sexy automobile designs for the cars they've exported to America. Now let's consider the Italians—gorgeous ladies, wonderful leather products, and exquisite Italian exotic automobiles. Let's get to the meat of this diatribe. Carlos Tavares should hire a fine Italian designer and then import those designs to the United States ["French Press," October 2016]. More Citroëns like the 2CV or Peugeots even remotely designed like the ridiculous examples of the past will not likely succeed despite what Robert Kozinets of USC Marshall School of Business said, "There's room for a lot of marginal brands." Not in my garage and not likely in that of any enthusiast.

—Philip Caravella
St. Augustine, FL

LEGEND FALLS

Surprised, but not too surprised, to see John Phillips mention Jim Harrison ["Keeping an appointment with a dead man," October 2016]. As a reader of Harrison, Phillips, and *C/D* (in that order), I appreciate the knowing nod to a specific type of greatness.

—Matt Main
Anchorage, AK

Phillips, listen, I like you. Well, I like most of what you write in your columns, but you are not doing your job, man. We don't care about Jim Harrison, really, we don't. We care about car stories, unbiased opinion about vehicles. In the future, please spend less time with Harrison and more time talking about the Sorrento. *Capisce*?

—Dario I.
San Diego, CA

Sorrento is a city in Italy. Sorento is a sport-ute by Kia. Capisce?—Ed.

PRICE CONTROL

Ezra Dyer is right: New-car prices are too high ["The rent is too damn high," October 2016]. Recently, I almost bought a loaded 2016 Subaru Outback 3.6R for $36,000. Instead, for $3000 more, I bought a certified 2013 Lexus RX350 F Sport with 18,000 miles. It has an almost three-year full warranty and will outlast the Subaru

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Rick Bisbee
Integrated Midwest Manager
Marc Gordon
Assistant Yvonne Villareal
DETROIT
Integrated Sales Director
Mark Fikany
Midwest Account Manager
Bryce Vredevoogd
Assistant Toni Starrs
LOS ANGELES
Integrated Sales Director
Anne Rethmeyer
Integration Associate
Michelle Nelson
Assistant Richard Panciocco
SAN FRANCISCO
Mediacentric, Inc.
Steve Thompson, William G. Smith
DALLAS
PR 4.0 Media Patty Rudolph

HEARST DIRECT MEDIA
Sales Manager
Brad Gettelfinger
Account Manager
John Stankewitz

MARKETING SOLUTIONS
Associate Publisher and Group Marketing Director
Jill Meenaghan
Executive Director, Integrated Marketing
Dawn Sheggeby
Executive Creative Director, Group Marketing
Jana Nesbitt Gale
Associate Marketing Director
Amanda Luginbill
Marketing Manager
Michael Coopersmith
Art Directors, Group Marketing
Elena Martorano, Michael Sarpy
Marketing Coordinator
Vincent Carbone
Group Digital Marketing Director
Kelley Gudahl
Digital Marketing Manager
Angelique Tyree
Research Manager
Peter Davis

THE BLEND LINE
Executive Creative Director
Maury Postal

ADMINISTRATION
Advertising Services Director
Regina Wall
Advertising Services & Accolades Manager Rebecca Taroon

PRODUCTION
Production/Operations Director
Chuck Lodato
Operations Account Manager
Elizabeth Cascone
Premedia Account Manager
Frank Linzan

CIRCULATION
Consumer Marketing Director
William Carter

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EXR SPRINT RACE SERIES MID-SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

After 10 rounds of the inaugural EXR Series, close racing has highlighted the action at top racing venues such as Circuit of The Americas, Laguna Seca, Sonoma, Las Vegas and Fontana. Professional drivers like Paul Morris and Arie Luyendyk Jr have lined-up alongside Burt Jenner, Roger Eagleton, Sammy Valafar, Pierre Preville and Rene Villeneuve who bested them for a victory. With 5 wins, Romain Thievin leads the field in points followed by David Perisset, Bill Hynes, our best lady Lisa Clark and Roger Eagleton. Celebrity Caitlyn Jenner reached the podium twice at COTA.

Standings: 1. Romain Thievin, 482 pts 2. David Perisset, 268 pts 3. Bill Hynes, 266 pts 4. Lisa Clark, 244 pts (Best Lady) 5. Roger Eagleton, 233 pts 6. Mark Ramsey, 140 pts 7. Clayton Shroeder, 108 pts 8. Hanna Zellers, 98 pts (Best Junior) T-9. Sammy Valafar, 90 pts T-9. Burt Jenner, 90 pts T-9. Michael Halverson, 90 pts 12. Richard Morris, 67 pts T-16. Arie Luyendyk Jr, 67 pts 18. Frederic Johais, 62 pts.

RACING DRIVER FEATURE

Richard, an accomplished entrepreneur, started racing with us after his High Performance Driving Experience at Exotics Racing; he then joined the racing school. Under the instruction of pros Tristan Vautier and Alex Premat, Richard saw his lap times drop after every lap.

"Their knowledge and ability is unparalleled, and if you just listen to them, you'll drive like them." He has signed for the season. *"If you are looking for a fun and thrilling racing experience, this is the series for you. It has certainly been perfect for me. This is a 1st class team of racing experts who work hard to make sure you have all you need to win. They set everything up perfectly, but it's up to me to get on podium which is half the fun."*

- Richard McIntosh

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and certainly me. Too bad I didn't know of this long ago.

—Bob Heilweck
Vancouver, WA

Okay, be honest. How many of you Googled the word "fugue" used by Ezra Dyer in his October column? Well, I did. If that is all it takes to send him into such a state of loss and confusion, how can he handle the prices at the grocery store? Poor soul, I feel for him each time he has to pay for the cost of doing business.

—Gary Eaches
Sarasota, FL

Think that's bad? My ennui is off the charts—Ed.

Ezra Dyer inadvertently makes a very compelling argument that inflation is too damn high.

—Sanjay Hari
Somerville, MA

SPIDERMEN

Why all the hatred for spider graphs? The scales are always oriented so that the best score, whether it be a lower number (say for braking distance or acceleration) or a higher number (say for EPA mpg) is always found farther out on any given arm of the graph. It's as easy as looking for the shape delineated by the scores of the car in question. If that shape has a larger area than any of the comparison vehicles on the same chart, the vehicle scores better. If the shape has a weird dip somewhere, compared with the other vehicles, that's a spot that may need your attention.

—Brett Towns
Toronto, ON

You get me, you really do—Ed.

If you have a ballot box for voting for or against the unnecessarily complex graphs and charts in the magazine, please register my vote as "against."

—Gary Tucker
Houston, TX

As an engineer, I love the spider charts for vehicle comparisons. It is simple to see that the larger and more expansive the area for the vehicle is, the better it performs compared with its competition. Also, the closer the charted line comes to a true octagon, the more balanced the car is in each phase of performance. Spiderwebs are amazing and so are your charts. No arachnophobia here.

—David Peters
Baton Rouge, LA

FINAL ACT

Would it be possible for Eddie Alterman to step down from his position? I would like to see if that betters my chances of having a letter published. Thank you in advance.

—Hal Feinberg
Camarillo, CA

Backfires is the exception that proves the 21st century's most important rule: Don't read the comments.

—Scott D. Simon
Pelham, NY

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Introducing the new Golf Alltrack with 4MOTION® all-wheel drive.
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Let's rethink dirt. Because with dirt also comes green grass, tall trees, and roads far less traveled. That's why we equipped the Golf Alltrack with 4MOTION all-wheel drive and an Off-Road Mode,* so you can go out there and seize the beauty of this dirt-covered world, get your wheels muddy, and wash off all that civilization. After all, dirt is the greatest of cleansers.

Volkswagen

vw.com

*Optional accessories shown. Always ensure that your vehicle is equipped with appropriate tires and equipment and always adjust your speed and driving style to the road, terrain, traffic, and weather conditions. See Owner's Manual for further details and important limitations. ©2016 Volkswagen of America, Inc.

BEFORE WE GO BLAZING INTO 2017 AND THE BEST OF WHAT'S NEW, LET'S TAKE A SHORT LOOK BACK AT THE YEAR THAT WAS AND THE BEST OF WHAT'S NOW. SPOILER ALERT: THE HELLCAT IS GOOD, AND ELON MUSK FANS GET WEIRD.

illustration by MARIUS ROOSENDAAL

WINNERS AND

SOME WHO WON, SOME WHO LOST, AND A FEW WHO TALKED THEIR WAY INTO THE BASKET OF DEPLORABLES.
by Aaron Robinson

▲ WINNERS: U.S. VW OWNERS

The half-million U.S. owners of Volkswagen and Audi 2.0 TDIs affected by the company's software cheat will get checks for somewhere between $5100 and $10,000, plus the chance to sell back their cars at the pre-scandal value. In Germany, the millions of owners of VW's smoggy diesels will get bupkes, just a software update to periodically remind drivers that instead of lawyers, Germany has the autobahn and the Nürburgring.

▼ LOSER: BERNIE

Formula 1 also suffered its own tribulations when Brazilian kidnappers nabbed boss Bernie Ecclestone's current mother-in-law (who is 18 years younger than Bernie) and held her for nine days until police busted the ring and freed her. "All my friends know that I wouldn't pay a penny for a mother-in-law," Bernie told the *Sunday Times*, "although I'd say she's a good mother-in-law."

▲ WINNER: JEREMY CLARKSON

Just the opening scene of Jeremy Clarkson's new Amazon Prime car show, *The Grand Tour*, was reported to cost about $3 million, of which $2 million went to catering, to be sure.

▼ LOSER: MERCEDES-BENZ

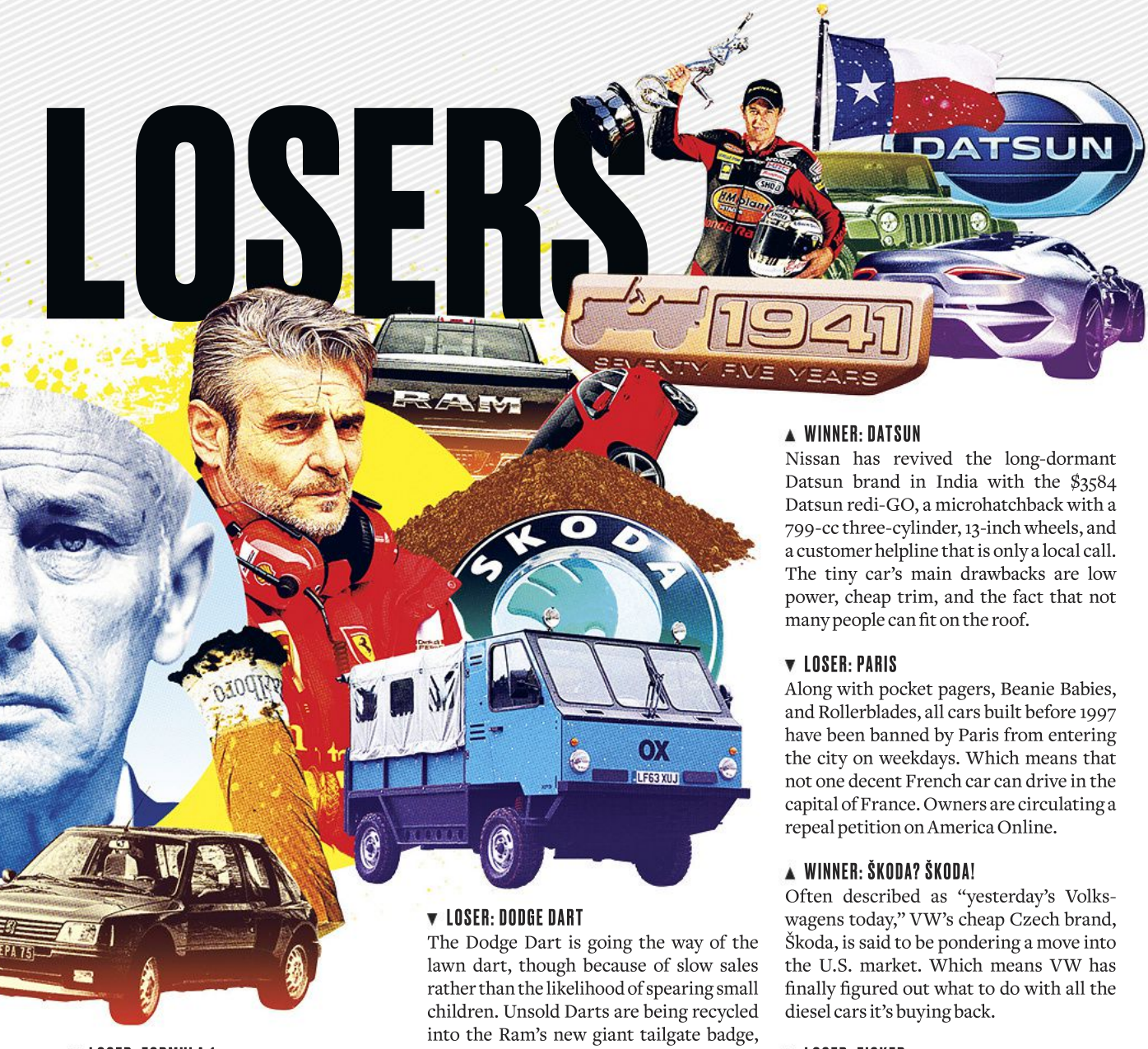
Though Mercedes-Benz ordered 12,500 *Saitenwürschtle* sausages for an April shareholders' meeting attended by 5500, some skinflinty Swabian was seen stuffing sausages in his pockets for later. The Berlin cops had to be called to break up a food fracas, reportedly sparked when a BMW owner cut into the buffet line without signaling.

▲ WINNER: ELON MUSK

Autonomous Teslas have crashed, a SpaceX rocket did a spectacular *kablooey* on the pad, doubts swirled about the Model 3, and Elon Musk himself was paid just $37,584 in 2015, or minimum wage in California. But at least he can boast that there's a heavy-metal band paying him tribute, something even Malcolm Bricklin never could say. Raptor Command's mission, according to the band's website, is to "raise awareness of and promote Elon Musk's futurist ideas and visions for the future of humanity." Its first and only single, "Elon: Champion for Humanity," includes the following possibly Nobel-worthy lyrics: "Racing to the future/ he puts the pedal down/one hundred thousand watts at his command. Rocketing to the stars/on to Mars we fly/heed his call, before the planet dies!" Musk said he was keen to see the band play live but, alas, couldn't afford the cover.

illustration by SEAN McCABE

LOSERS



▼ LOSER: FORMULA 1

Ferrari team principal and former Phillip Morris exec Maurizio Arrivabene got arrested in Singapore and fined about $800 for tossing a cigarette butt on the street. Singapore is not your ashtray any more than Malaysia has a Gay Prix, as nine Aussies discovered after landing in jail for dropping their drawers during the post-race celebration.

▲ WINNER: GORDON MURRAY

Celebrated McLaren F1 designer Gordon Murray says it was boxes of IKEA furniture that inspired him to create the OX, a cheap cargo truck for the developing world with a waterproof laminated-plywood body that packs flat for shipping. The OX has a small diesel engine and a 2.1-ton payload, and it comes with a stoned roommate to help assemble it.

▼ LOSER: DODGE DART

The Dodge Dart is going the way of the lawn dart, though because of slow sales rather than the likelihood of spearing small children. Unsold Darts are being recycled into the Ram's new giant tailgate badge, which is about four feet high and an inch thick, and offered with optional Bluetooth and satellite radio.

▲ WINNER: JEEP

Though the Jeep brand gratuitously employs the tagline "Since 1941" and this year marked its 75th anniversary, the actual 75th doesn't happen until 2025, we figure. In 1941, the word "jeep" was just GI slang for a variety of vehicles, but it wasn't until 1950 that the government awarded Willys-Overland the Jeep trademark, meaning this year's celebration amounts to premature ejeepulation.

▼ LOSER: TEXAS DEALERS

Car dealerships in Texas suffered the worst hail season in memory, with 110,000 vehicles damaged at a cost of $560 million. So, only nine more plagues to go.

▲ WINNER: DATSUN

Nissan has revived the long-dormant Datsun brand in India with the $3584 Datsun redi-GO, a microhatchback with a 799-cc three-cylinder, 13-inch wheels, and a customer helpline that is only a local call. The tiny car's main drawbacks are low power, cheap trim, and the fact that not many people can fit on the roof.

▼ LOSER: PARIS

Along with pocket pagers, Beanie Babies, and Rollerblades, all cars built before 1997 have been banned by Paris from entering the city on weekdays. Which means that not one decent French car can drive in the capital of France. Owners are circulating a repeal petition on America Online.

▲ WINNER: ŠKODA? ŠKODA!

Often described as "yesterday's Volkswagens today," VW's cheap Czech brand, Škoda, is said to be pondering a move into the U.S. market. Which means VW has finally figured out what to do with all the diesel cars it's buying back.

▼ LOSER: FISKER

Proving yet again the validity of the Streisand effect, British automaker Aston Martin threatened to sue car designer and hybrid entrepreneur Henrik Fisker if he showed his decidedly Aston-like Fisker Force 1 at the Detroit auto show. Whereupon Fisker sued Aston for $100 million, whereupon the entire world suddenly learned of the Fisker Force 1.

▲ WINNER: ISLE OF MAN

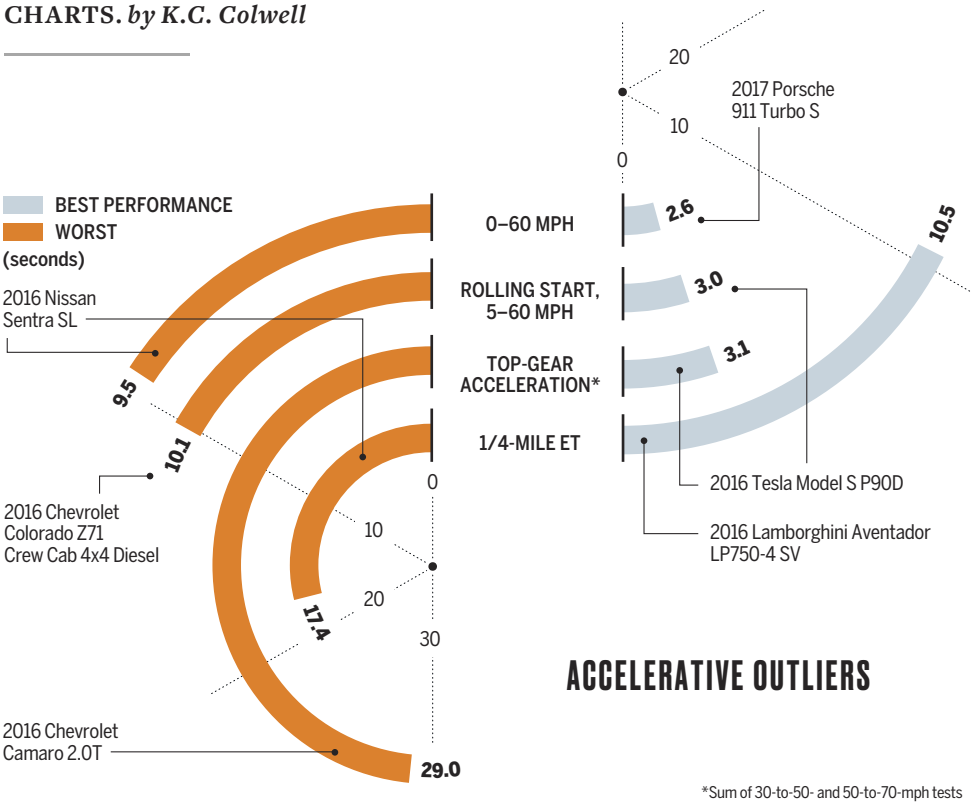
Famous for its deadly Tourist Trophy motorcycle road race, the Isle of Man, between England and Northern Ireland, has declared itself a haven for autonomous vehicles. The independent government has invited automakers to come and freely test their robo-cars on the island's undulating roads, where there have already been many brief experiments with riderless bikes.

PHOTOGRAPHS GETTY IMAGES

[the year in review]

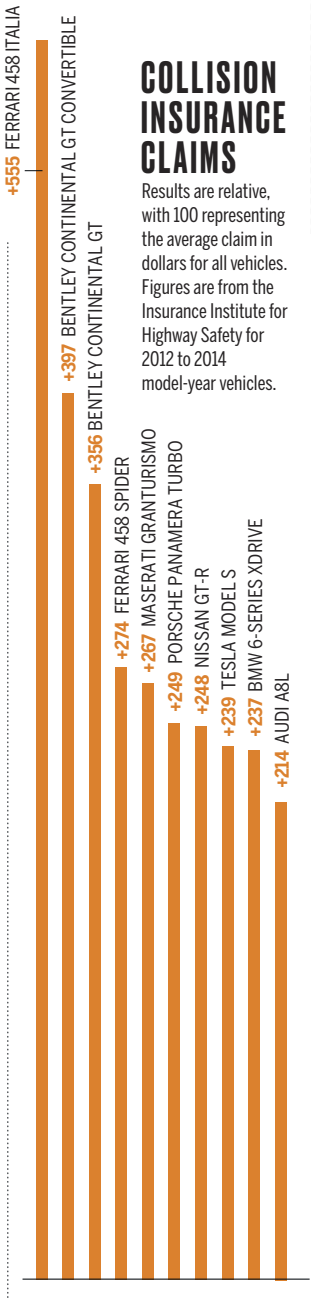
DATA CENTRAL

THE YEAR THAT WAS IN NUMBERS, DEPICTED IN MOSTLY SCRUTABLE CHARTS. *by K.C. Colwell*



COLLISION INSURANCE CLAIMS

Results are relative, with 100 representing the average claim in dollars for all vehicles. Figures are from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety for 2012 to 2014 model-year vehicles.



SOUND LEVEL

Interior sound level at 70 mph

2016 Rolls-Royce Dawn, 2017 Bentley Bentayga

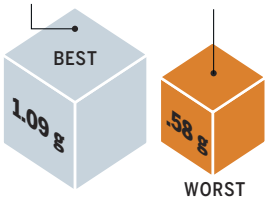
BEST **61 dBA**

WORST **77 dBA**

2015 BMW M3, 2016 Lamborghini Aventador LP750-4 SV, 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata Club, 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata GT Automatic

ROADHOLDING

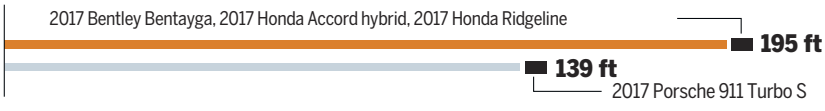
300-ft skidpad



*Stability-control inhibited

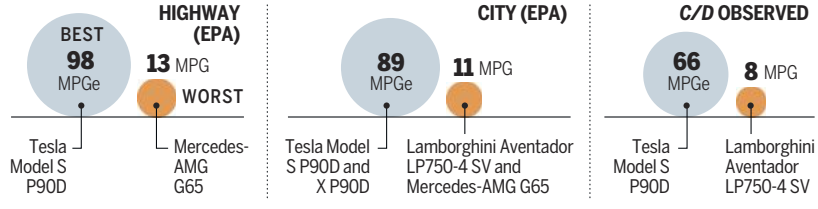
BRAKING

70 to 0 mph



FUEL ECONOMY

All models are 2016



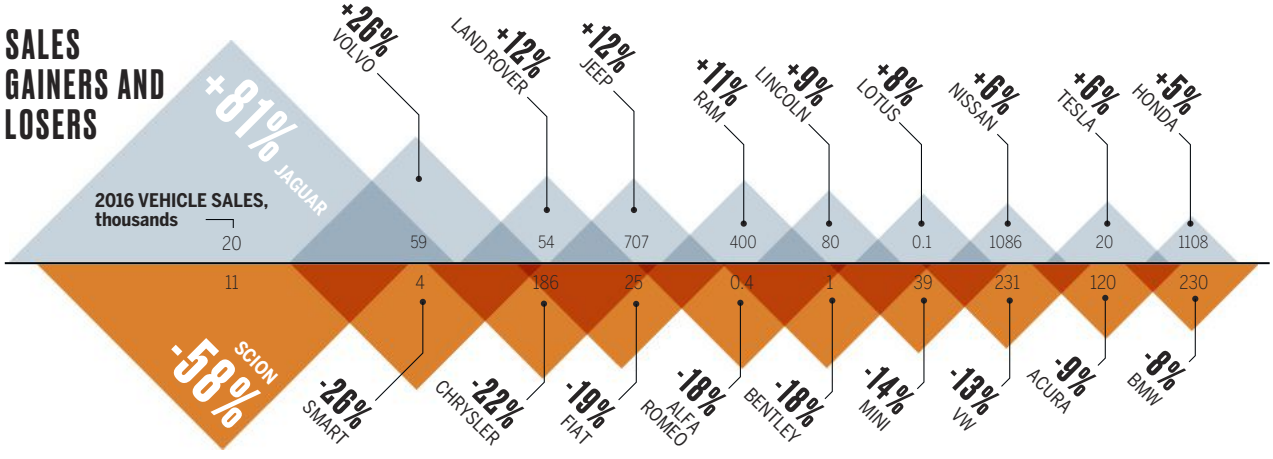
infographic by NICOLAS RAPP

2016 SALES LEADERS AND LANGUISHERS (January–September)

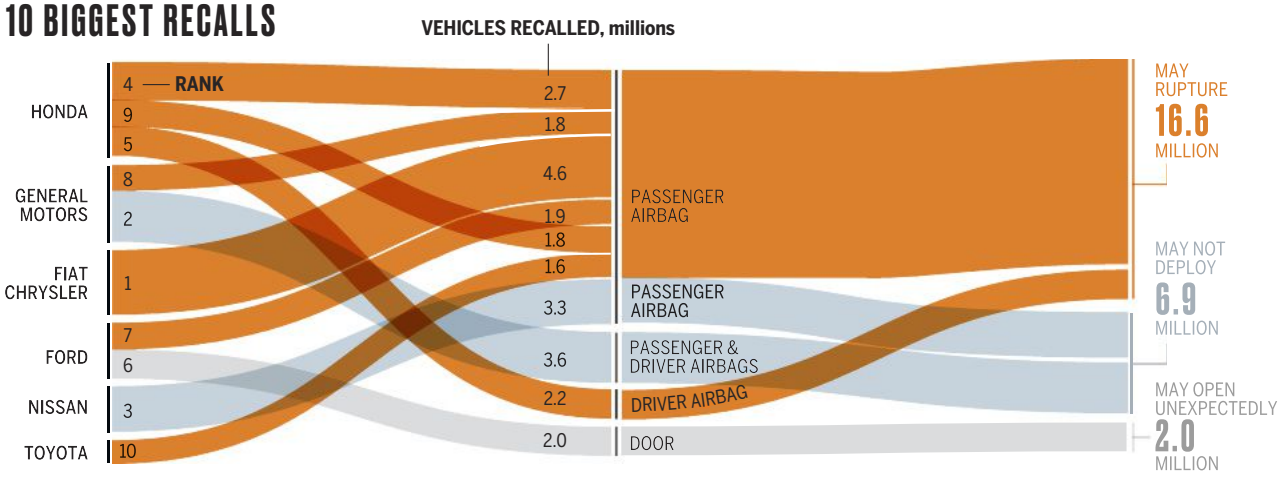
RANK	BRAND	LEADERS	VEHICLES
1	FORD		1,896,858
2	TOYOTA		1,574,847
3	CHEVROLET		1,531,912
4	HONDA		1,108,653
5	NISSAN		1,086,249
6	JEEP		707,106
7	HYUNDAI		584,980
8	KIA		491,764
9	SUBARU		446,887
10	RAM		400,300

BRAND	LANGUISHERS	VEHICLES
LOTUS		126
ALFA ROMEO		418
ASTON MARTIN		774
LAMBORGHINI		774
ROLLS-ROYCE		918
BENTLEY		1475
FERRARI		1845
GENESIS		2708
SMART		4044
MASERATI		8156

SALES GAINERS AND LOSERS



10 BIGGEST RECALLS



10 SMALLEST RECALLS

1 VEHICLE

2016 MERCEDES-BENZ CLA45 AMG

Clutch-disc weld may crack

1 VEHICLE

2017 BMW X3

Electronic power-steering control unit not welded

2 VEHICLES

2016 BMW X1 & MINI COOPER

Steering gearbox malfunction

2016 MERCEDES-BENZ METRIS

Improper rear-differential gear weld

2016 MERCEDES-BENZ GLE450

Head restraints may not stay locked in place

3 VEHICLES

2015–16 MERCEDES-BENZ SPRINTER

Super-high-roof vehicles missing crash pads

5 VEHICLES

2016 LINCOLN MKX

Child-seat tether anchor blocked

2009, 2011–12, 2015 JAGUAR XF

Airbag second stage may not inflate properly

7 VEHICLES

2015 MASERATI GHIBLI

Front wheel bearings with insufficient hardness

8 VEHICLES

2017 AUDI Q7

Loss of electrical power-steering assist

$80K+ CARS

AND NOW, 10 REASONS WE WISH OUR 10BEST PRICE CAP WERE HIGHER. *by Andrew Wendler*

NO, $80,000 DOESN'T STRIKE many of us as particularly affordable, either. But we set the price cap for 10Best eligibility there because it does strike us as the upper limit for what people living in the fat part of the income bell curve would find attainable, leaving a comfortable buffer before a car's price picks up a sixth digit. And beyond $80K, excellence should be pretty much assured. There are, however, plenty of cars above that threshold that do legitimately stand out. Those, we honor here:

BMW i8
For $141,695, you get an EPA-rated 15 miles of electric range, plus the engaging back-road behavior of a mid-engined sports car and the most adventurous exterior styling anywhere on the market. A 3.6-second zero-to-60-mph sprint doesn't hurt, either.

Cadillac CTS-V
It has a 640-hp, supercharged 6.2-liter V-8 and big Brembo brakes, and it hits 100 mph in 7.5 seconds. This is what happens when the engineers run wild with the checkbook. Even at an $87,590 base MSRP, though, the price belies the sheer amount of performance, technology, and opulence packed into the sporty CTS-V.

—

Chevrolet Corvette Z06
You could submit a blood test to get on the waiting list for a six-figure exotic from a faraway land (such as any of the next three vehicles on this list), or you could shell out about $95K for a Z06 and be faster around the track than all of them.

—

Ferrari 488GTB
With a 661-hp, twin-turbo 3.9-liter V-8 providing the thrust and an adaptive suspension sorting wheel movements, the 488GTB resubmits everything your nervous system had previously learned about how a vehicle performs. Any complaints about its $249,150 base price can easily be silenced—or at least drowned out—by a quick 8000-rpm refrain from the engine compartment.

—

Lamborghini Huracán
Naturally aspirated engines are fading even from supercars, but the Huracán is holding fast to its 602-horse free-breathing V-10. Its styling may be toned down from its big brother's, but its performance isn't. The Huracán outaccelerates and outbrakes even the half-million-dollar-plus Aventador SV at a savings of some $300,000. And the new $203,295 LP580-2 is the only rear-drive Lambo available.

—

McLaren 570S
Rare is the modern supercar that delivers such an organic driving experience. The 570S's steering offers a direct conduit between its driver's hands and the pavement. With 562 horsepower from a twin-turbocharged 3.8-liter flat-plane-crankshaft V-8, flinging from apex to apex in it is the next-best thing to being Fernando Alonso. Entry is $187,300, a mere pittance once you see the light.

—

Mercedes-AMG GT S
Although gullwing doors are not part of the package, the GT S is still recognizable as a descendant of Mercedes' legendary 300SL. It's the closest thing the Porsche 911 has had to true German competition in years, but with a 503-hp, twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8 up front providing motivation, it delivers a markedly different GT experience, one worthy of its $132,125 base price.

—

Mercedes-Benz S-class
Unless you step up to the British aristo class with a Bentley or a Rolls-Royce, you won't find a more opulent or comfortable interior than the one in this Benz. And now you can package that interior in a sedan, coupe, or new-for-2017 convertible. A base sedan with a 449-hp V-8 starts at $97,525.

—

Porsche 911
The ingredients have changed slightly over the years, but the recipe remains the same: Mix a rear-mounted flat-six engine with one of the most responsive and communicative chassis in existence, then hang on tight. Tastes start at $90,450 and climb toward $200,000 as you add power, driven front wheels, and baubles such as color-matched leather coat hooks.

—

Tesla Model S P90D
Change can be scary, especially for fans of burnt hydrocarbons. Thankfully, Mr. Musk is committed to easing our fears with an EV that doesn't drive as though a traveling anvil salesman left his sample kit in the trunk. The P90D ran an 11.1-second quarter-mile at 121 mph, eclipsing 60 in just 2.8 seconds along the way. And there's a P100D coming soon, too.

illustration by SEAN McCABE

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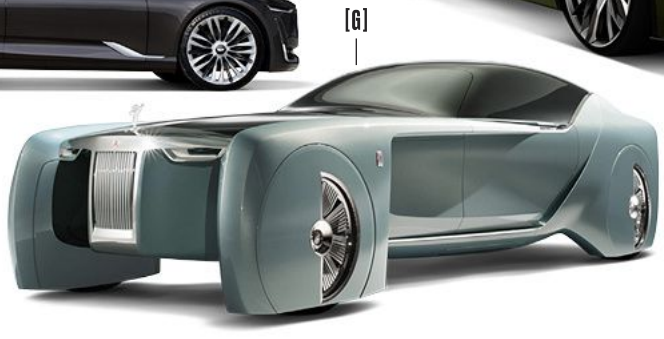
CONCEPT CARS



NINE OF THIS YEAR'S BEST EXAMPLES OF AUTO-SHOW CANDY AND ONE BAT-GUANO-CRAZY ROLLS-ROYCE. *by Daniel Pund*

[A] BUICK AVISTA

In a world of ho-hum crossovers, several of them Buicks, the brand's big coupe concept looks like a revolution. It's a well-proportioned lozenge with careful sculpting and a gimmick-free body. A 400-hp twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6 drives the rear wheels. But honestly, what company would sell a vehicle these days that doesn't have bumper covers modeled to look like skid plates?

[B] VISION MERCEDES-MAYBACH 6

You might ask what sense it makes that this electrically powered concept has enough distance between the front axle and the dashboard to accommodate a V-16. But don't ask, because the Vision 6 isn't about anything as boring as packaging or sense. The massive Vision 6 is a totem of space inefficiency rolled out for the swells at the Pebble Beach concours. It is a proletariat-be-damned art deco codpiece. It is a fever dream of a Talbot-Lago. It is spectacular.

[C] OPEL GT

Opel resisted the urge to make its new GT concept a scale model of the Chevy Corvette, as was the original 1969 production Opel GT. Instead, Opel created a smooth little nugget of a coupe shrink-wrapped around its tires. Why are two of those tires red? Beats us. Possibly for the same reason the whole vehicle looks as if it's been covered in glossy plastic lamination, giving it the appearance of a glycerin suppository. This rear-drive two-seater, powered by a turbocharged three-cylinder engine, would be a natural competitor for the Subaru BRZ.

[D] CADILLAC ESCALA

We're coming to accept that the achingly gorgeous Cadillac Elmiraj coupe concept will never make it to production. What the Escala sedan concept gives up in visual grace to the Elmiraj, it makes up in production plausibility. Yes, the Escala's proportions are copied straight from the Audi S7, but they're good proportions, besmirched, perhaps, only by the circa-2014 Acura TL–like rear end. This bigger-than-CT6, V-8–powered sedan previews the styling of the upcoming flagship Caddy.

[E] JEEP CREW CHIEF 715

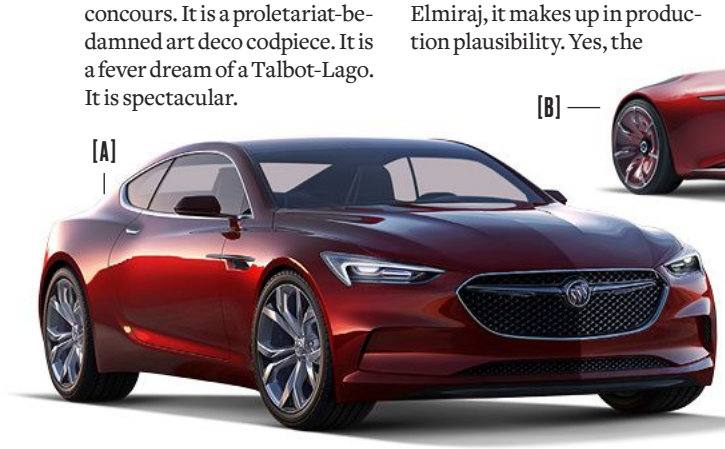
Jeep gets us every time with its retro concepts. Perhaps this is because old Jeeps didn't look like Chiclets (see: Renegade). And this matte-green truck is our favorite so far. It's pretty much just a Wrangler underneath, but the pickup bed, late-'60s Kaiser M715–style nose, and 40-inch military NDT tires give the Crew Chief 715 a retro-soldier vibe that speaks directly to our inner little boys. A Wrangler-based pickup will hit the market in about a year, but it won't inspire the Walter Mitty–style fantasies that the 715 evokes.

[F] GENESIS NEW YORK

Like the Escala, the Genesis New York (which was—surprise!—unveiled at the New York auto show) apes the general proportions of the Audi S7. We're beginning to think there might be a ready-made template for car designers onto which they add their own company's grille and taillight designs. But the New York is a handsome thing that points the way toward the brand's upcoming BMW 3-series fighter, the G70.

[G] ROLLS-ROYCE 103EX

With the 103EX concept, Rolls is taking the bold position that,



in the future, cars will look exponentially more ridiculous than they do today. Think of it as a *Tron* movie prop as seen through the eyes of a filthy-rich steampunk enthusiast. The electric 103EX has no driver controls because it's imagined to be fully autonomous and controlled by a computer chauffeur named Eleanor. So sink into the silk-covered love seat (with throw pillows), secure in the knowledge that no one will be able to see you inside the thing.

[H] CITROËN DS E-TENSE

Forgive us, people of France, but the Citroën DS E-Tense concept looks just like a frog. And who doesn't love a frog? Even when coated in a layer of deadly toxins, they are adorbs! This concept, built from carbon fiber and powered by electric motors, even has a rear window precisely the size of an actual frog. It's all in the details, folks. We think we might even be able to see an exposed tendon just behind the E-Tense's front-leg bulge. When amphibians take over the world, this is what the more rakish of them will drive.

[I] ITALDESIGN GTZERO

You know what we were thinking just the other day? That we would like a car that was a Lamborghini Aventador up front and a Volvo P1800ES in the back. Call it the anti-mullet. Okay, so it's yet another electric sports-car concept boasting unrealistic range estimates, but it's a supercar shooting brake with a quasi-Kamm tail. How you gonna front on that?

[J] TOYOTA SETSUNA

Toyota boasts that it used no nails in the construction of the Setsuna roadster concept. When was the last time a carmaker felt it necessary to point that out? When, indeed, was the last time a carmaker crafted a wooden canoe on wheels—a "carnoe," if you will? To answer these questions, we watched a promotional cartoon Toyota made about the Setsuna wherein a boy with a unibrow uses a key to carve into the car's wooden body a drawing of his father's head and his own head side by side. After a hearty laugh about that, the two drive off into a world that is entirely red and has no roads. So that about nails it. Also, does anyone else feel really baked right now?

DESIGN DETAILS

Audi TT vents
The time Audi invested in designing these functional works of miniature art might explain why the rest of the TT looks so much like the previous one.

—

Volvo S90 door-panel speaker grilles
The shapely grilles of the B&W audio system allow a tantalizing peek at the creamy-gold Kevlar cones that sound great.

—

BMW M3/M4 Competition package wheels
These are the snowflakes that God would make if He owned a CNC mill.

—

Jeep Renegade Sasquatch
Why does it have the silhouette of Sasquatch on its rear window? Because Chupacabra's agent wanted too much money.

—

Mercedes-Benz puddle lamp
Mercedes' puddle-lamp projection is so detailed that if you bend down and run your hand across it, you can feel the pebbled texture of the badge. Well, actually, you're just feeling pebbles on the ground, but it's impressive nonetheless.

Bugatti Chiron C-shaped intake
This graceful sweeping piece of body-side trim makes us forget the chubby bug that was the Bugatti Veyron.

—

Ford GT flying buttresses
Do the flying buttresses at Notre Dame transport air from the intercoolers to the engine? No, sir. But Ford's do.

—

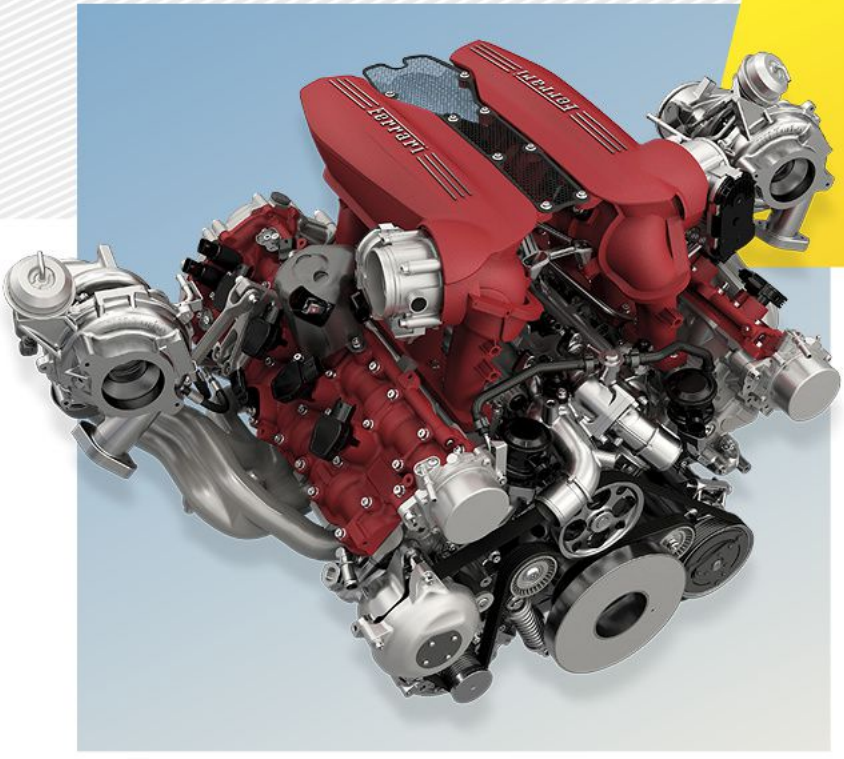
Jeep Wrangler 75th-anniversary wheels
Black wheels are so over. Give us low-gloss bronze-colored ones—earthy, with just the right touch of glimmer.

—

Volvo XC90 T8 crystal shifter
Straight out of your great-aunt's curio cabinet comes this Orrefors crystal shifter. It can also be removed and filled with the fancy salt of your choice to make a great tabletop accompaniment for your heirloom china.

—

Porsche Macan taillight
A deeply recessed parallelogram with a proud ridge running along the middle, the Macan's taillights are simple, powerful sculpture. One demerit: They don't spell out "PONTIAC" when lit.



Ferrari twin-turbocharged 3.9-liter V-8
Output range: 552–661 hp, 557–561 lb-ft
Available in: California T, GTC4Lusso T, 488
What Ferrari's 488 lost in splendid aural insanity, it gained in straight-up strength. There are 99 additional horsepower and a full 163 pound-feet more torque on tap than the 458 delivered. Yes, turbos are good that way. Plus, who doesn't love redheads?

ENGINES

OUR 10 FAVORITE GAS BURNERS. *by Josh Jacquot*

SOMETIMES, INTERNAL-COMBUSTION GREATNESS doesn't scream. Here, alongside the bona fide wailers, we call out those with hidden depths, the mechanical equivalents of everyone's favorite winking girl next door, distractress Parker Posey. She's an expert at braining you without even trying, and so are some of the mills below. It's no accident that this list bears more than a passing resemblance to our last, created in 2010. Greatness begets greatness.

Audi/Lamborghini 5.2-liter V-10
Output range: 540–610 hp, 398–413 lb-ft
Available in: Audi R8, Lamborghini Huracán
After letting this V-10 scream to an eardrum-eviscerating 8800 rpm, you'll need new stirrups and anvils. It makes most engines sound like an embarrassment to internal combustion.

BMW turbocharged 2.0-liter inline-4 (B46)
Output range: 228–248 hp, 237–258 lb-ft
Available in: X1, 2-, 3-, 4-series; Mini Clubman, Convertible, Hardtop
Though it's most at home running to and from the Emporium, it's more fulfilling to get this boosted four out on the road to the Moontower. A member of BMW's new modular-engine family, the B46 helps streamline production. But the real benefit is that it delivers nearly 250 smooth, lag-free horsepower and a shelf of usable torque.

—

BMW turbocharged 3.0-liter inline-6 (B58)
Output range: 320–335 hp, 330–369 lb-ft
Available in: 2-, 3-, 4-, 7-series
Yes, it'll fry the bolognas like bacon. But it's the B58's twin-scroll linearity and creamy polish above six grand that sell its straight-six supremacy in a world of gray-ghost V-6s. All that boost is just gravy.

—

Chevrolet 6.2-liter V-8 (LT1)
Output range: 455–460 hp, 455–465 lb-ft
Available in: Camaro, Corvette
Let us tell you what Melba Toast is packin': There's tire-ripping torque right off idle, but it still pulls hard at 6500 rpm. Few naturally aspirated V-8s, especially at this price, are more potent or full of character.

—

Dodge supercharged 6.2-liter V-8 (Hellcat)
Output: 707 hp, 650 lb-ft
Available in: Challenger SRT Hellcat, Charger SRT Hellcat
This ground shaker is so loud that it contributed to Chrysler's allegedly purchasing additional land around its proving grounds to shield its neighbors from the noise. No other V-8 in production makes this much power. Mat it from a slow roll, and vehicle speed doesn't catch up to wheel speed until nearly 100 mph. We're talkin' some, well, you know . . . muscle.

—

Ford twin-turbocharged 2.7-liter V-6 (Nano)
Output range: 315–335 hp, 350–380 lb-ft
Available in: Edge, Fusion, F-150; Lincoln Continental, MKX
You got twin turbos? Be a whole lot cooler if you did. Ford's double pumper powers products ranging from the F-150 to the Fusion Sport. No other engine has the flexibility to competently tow your race car and power a sports sedan. It makes the 3.5-liter EcoBoost V-6 utterly redundant.

—

Ford 5.2-liter V-8 (Voodoo)
Output: 526 hp, 429 lb-ft
Available in: Mustang Shelby GT350/GT350R
Ford's Voodoo V-8 is a special piece of red, white, and blue madness that doesn't bother getting started until 4000 rpm. Fortunately, it still has 4250 revs to go and a yowl that encourages you to crowd the top of the tach. Even comes with 12.0:1 pop-up pistons.

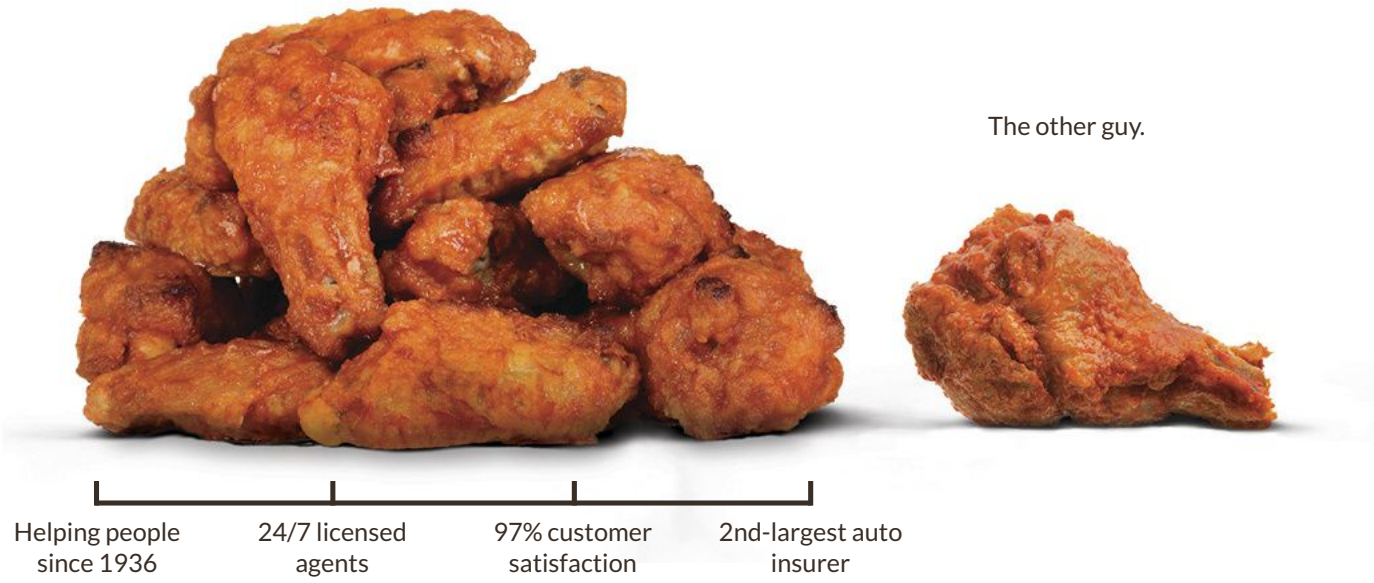
—

Mercedes-AMG twin-turbocharged 4.0-liter V-8 (M176, M177, M178)
Output range: 416–577 hp, 443–516 lb-ft
Available in: AMG C63, AMG GT, G550
It's so glorious on overrun, you'll almost forget that what you're hearing isn't the machine's petulance but a carefully contrived concerto of Germanic precision. In the 2018 AMG GT R, it'll make 577 horsepower. Reminds us that we're still livin', man.

—

Porsche 4.0-liter flat-6 (MA176)
Output: 500 hp, 339 lb-ft
Available in: 911 GT3 RS, 911 R
Porsche's big-bore boxer sounds so good at 8500 rpm that it'll wipe that face right off your head. This is naturally aspirated Porsche at its very best, and it'll be the last such engine in a 911 for a few years. We'll miss it.

GEICO



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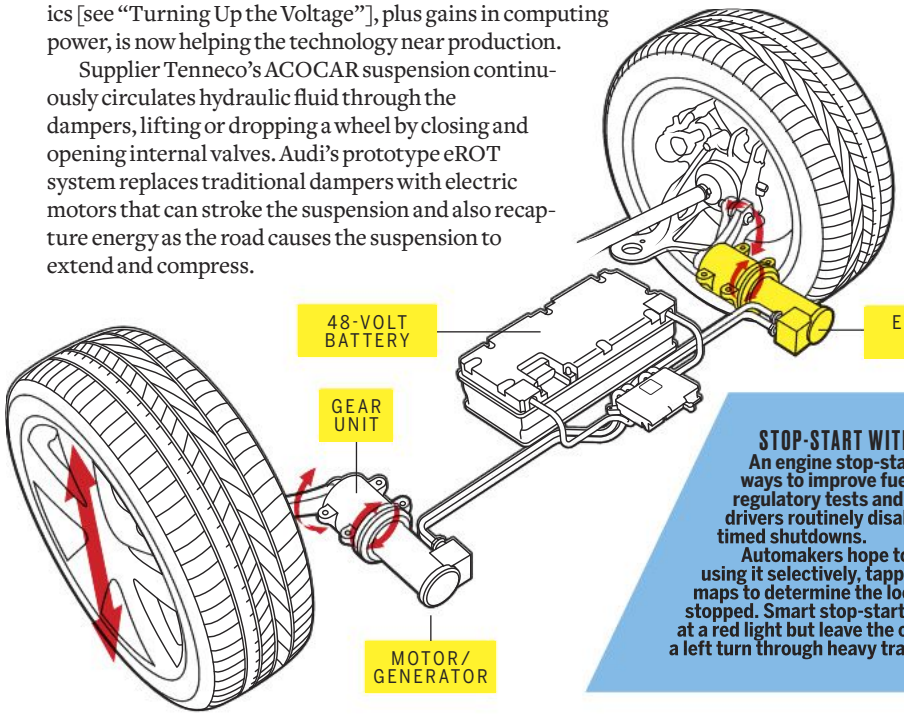
MOST PROMISING TECHNOLOGY

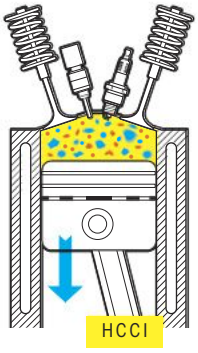
SELLING POINTS OF YOUR NEXT CAR.
by Eric Tingwall and David Beard

MAGIC CARPET RIDE

While adaptive suspensions have proliferated, the Holy Grail remains a truly active suspension in which the car can stroke individual wheels up or down to follow the contours of the road and minimize disruptions to the cabin. In 2004, audio-specialist Bose revealed a prototype Lexus LS that could corner and brake with no visible roll or dive. The adoption of 48-volt electronics [see "Turning Up the Voltage"], plus gains in computing power, is now helping the technology near production.

Supplier Tenneco's ACOCAR suspension continuously circulates hydraulic fluid through the dampers, lifting or dropping a wheel by closing and opening internal valves. Audi's prototype eROT system replaces traditional dampers with electric motors that can stroke the suspension and also recapture energy as the road causes the suspension to extend and compress.





GASOLINE UNPLUGGED

Burning gasoline the way a diesel engine burns diesel—by switching off the spark plugs and igniting the fuel with the pressure of compression—can lead to diesel-like efficiency with even lower emissions. For decades, though, these experimental homogeneous-charge compression-ignition (HCCI) engines have remained on the sidelines.

Advancements in computing power will change that by making it easier to monitor and control ignition timing, the effective compression ratio, and cylinder temperatures. Mazda is currently working on perfecting the process for its second generation of Skyactiv technologies, set to make its debut sometime around 2020.

STOP-START WITH SMARTS

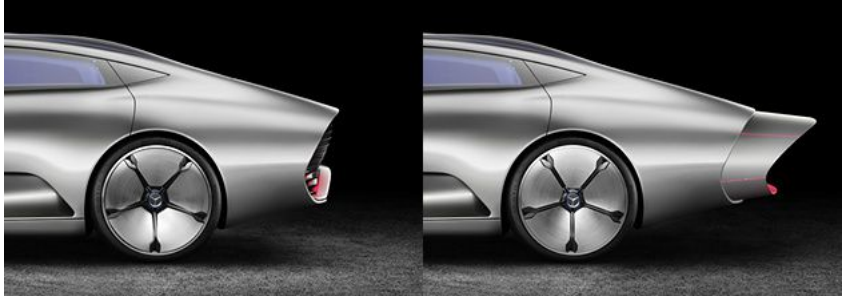
An engine stop-start system is among the easiest and cheapest ways to improve fuel economy and reduce emissions, both on regulatory tests and in the real world. But its benefits dwindle if drivers routinely disable the feature because of annoying, ill-timed shutdowns.

Automakers hope to make the technology less intrusive by using it selectively, tapping onboard cameras or high-definition maps to determine the location of the vehicle and the reason it is stopped. Smart stop-start systems could shut down the engine at a red light but leave the car idling when you're trying to sneak a left turn through heavy traffic.

BECAUSE EVERY SELF-DRIVING CAR DESERVES A WARM MEAL

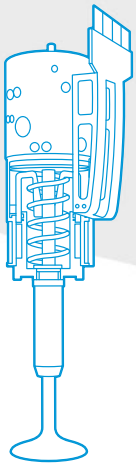
Lidar (a portmanteau of "light" and "radar") bounces laser off objects to plot a three-dimensional map of its surroundings with more detail than radar or cameras can see. It's a key autonomy enabler, but the spinning KFC buckets atop Google's self-driving pods cost thousands of dollars, rely on precision-moving parts, and instill deep anxiety in automotive designers.

Solid-state lidar sensors eliminate the moving parts to reduce size and cost. Quanergy uses an optical phase array, a sort of electronically controlled prism, to steer the beams emitted from its S3 lidar unit. With a 120-degree horizontal-and-vertical field of view and the rough dimensions of a 2.5-inch-thick deck of cards, an S3 at each corner could provide a complete picture of a car's environment. Quanergy is aiming for $250 per unit in volume production.



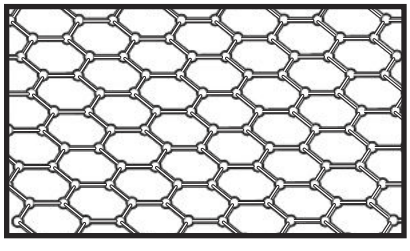
SHAPESHIFTERS

The Mercedes-Benz Intelligent Aerodynamic Automobile shows that grille shutters are just the beginning of drag-reducing aids. At about 50 mph, the concept switches into aerodynamic mode, extending its tail by 15 inches, flattening its dished wheels, and redirecting air around the front end with movable spats for a drag coefficient of just 0.19. Expect production cars to adapt similar ideas with subtler executions.



GIVING CAMS THE SHAFT

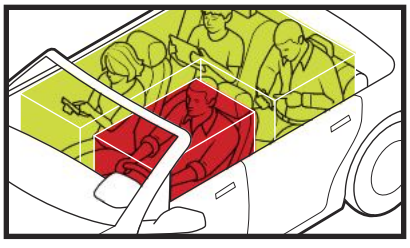
Replacing rotating camshafts with individual controls at each valve makes possible infinitely variable valve timing and lift. FreeValve, a sister company to Swedish hypercar-builder Koenigsegg, uses electronically controlled pneumatic actuators to mimic camshaft operations from zero to 20,000 rpm. Efficiency and performance gains follow, and features such as Atkinson-cycle operation and cylinder deactivation can be easily added with lines of code. Camless engines also reduce parasitic losses and shrink the overall size of an engine.



HARDER, BETTER, LIGHTER, STRONGER

Flexible, transparent, electrically and thermally conductive, and 200 times stronger than steel, graphene is a honeycomb lattice of carbon just one atom thick. It is widely considered a wonder material. The obvious automotive application is in structural composites, where it could reduce the weight of a unibody by as much as one-third. It could also enable sci-fi concepts, such as windshields that double as infotainment displays and body panels that contain integrated circuitry.

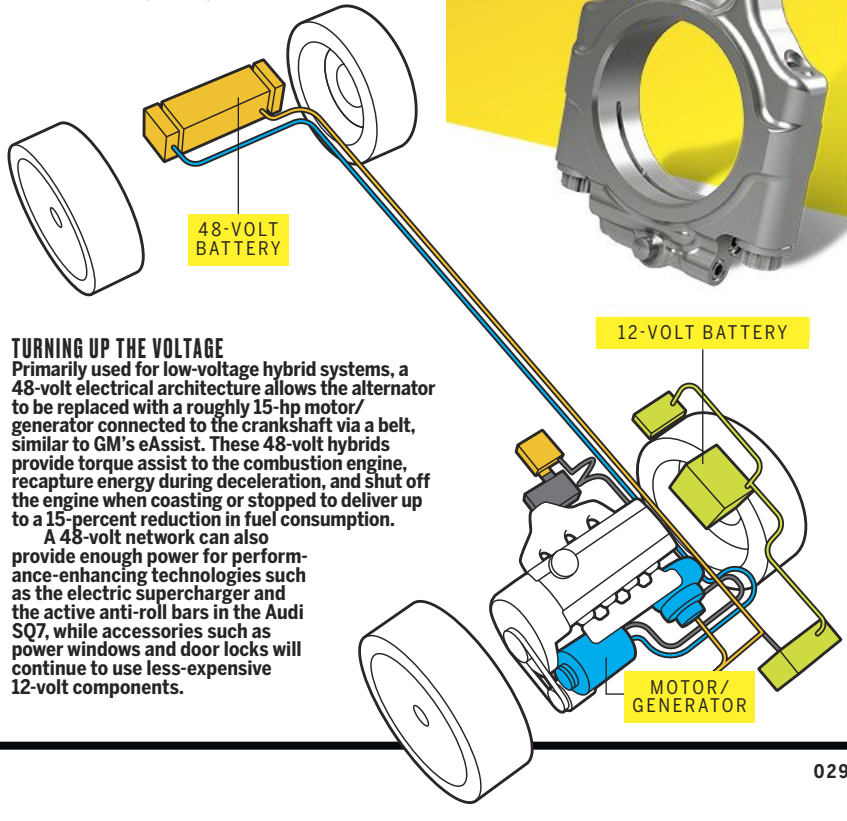
Pure graphene was first isolated in 2004, so scientists are still developing the computer models and production methods necessary for widespread adoption. Those issues, among other things, are the focus of Graphene Flagship, the European Union's 10-year, billion-euro ($1.1 billion) research initiative intended to build an industry around the material.



THE DRIVER YOU ARE TRYING TO REACH IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE

The idea is simple: Eliminate the temptation to tweet, snap, text, and selfie while driving by making it impossible. Apple already holds a patent to lock out certain features if a phone's GPS and camera indicate the device is being used from the driver's seat of a moving vehicle.

And yet, it may never happen, at least not by a company whose stock price is tied to the chokehold it has on your attention. But limiting phone use while driving would immediately and significantly benefit driving safety.



TURNING UP THE VOLTAGE

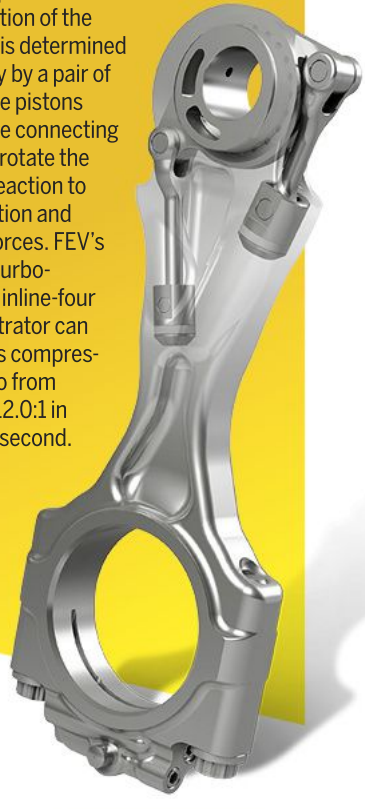
Primarily used for low-voltage hybrid systems, a 48-volt electrical architecture allows the alternator to be replaced with a roughly 15-hp motor/generator connected to the crankshaft via a belt, similar to GM's eAssist. These 48-volt hybrids provide torque assist to the combustion engine, recapture energy during deceleration, and shut off the engine when coasting or stopped to deliver up to a 15-percent reduction in fuel consumption.

A 48-volt network can also provide enough power for performance-enhancing technologies such as the electric supercharger and the active anti-roll bars in the Audi SQ7, while accessories such as power windows and door locks will continue to use less-expensive 12-volt components.

SELECTABLE SQUISH

Raising an engine's compression ratio improves fuel efficiency during low-load operation, but it can also lead to catastrophic detonation when maximum power is requested. Engineers have long sought to navigate this challenge with a variable-compression-ratio engine, and Infiniti promises to implement its solution in early 2018 with a complex system of links in the crankcase.

There's more than one way to skin this cat, though. German powertrain engineering company FEV proposes a piston wrist pin that passes through an eccentric bushing at the top of the connecting rod. As the bushing rotates, the piston moves vertically, relative to the rod, in turn adjusting the compression ratio. The position of the bushing is determined passively by a pair of miniature pistons inside the connecting rod that rotate the cam in reaction to combustion and inertia forces. FEV's 1.7-liter turbocharged inline-four demonstrator can adjust its compression ratio from 8.8:1 to 12.0:1 in 0.2–0.6 second.



illustrations by CHRIS PHILPOT

TACO BELL FANTASIES

MIXING AND MATCHING COMPONENTS TO MAKE THE 10 CARS WE WISH EXISTED.

by John Pearley Huffman

THE CAR MARKET IS RUNNING out of niches for automakers to fill, but carmakers keep inventing niches and then filling them. While you're at it, great marketing minds, here are our 10Best cars that should exist. Please send the royalty checks to the Ann Arbor address.

ACURA NSX LIGHTWEIGHT

Trash the hybrid bits and what's left is a 3200-pound, mid-engined, rear-drive NSX powered by a 500-hp twin-turbo V-6 (surely there's 650 in there somewhere). So, basically, the version of the NSX the FIA is making Honda run in GT3. That's enough mechanical swoop to chase the original NSX legend, to humble Ferraris, and to reawaken Honda's long-dormant sorcery.

BMW i M8

Yes, it's the exact same idea. And yes, we already like the i8. But we'd like it even more if BMW would shuck the greenie virtue and replace it with the M2's 365-hp 3.0-liter turbo six. It wouldn't have the firepower of its contemporaries, but then again, neither did the M1. And it was fantastic.

CHRYSLER PACIFICA HELLCAT

Mate Chrysler's best vehicle with its best engine, and keep the vacuum to clean up all the puke. So what if the Pacifica would need a new chassis, the utility would vaporize because the engine would have to be where the middle-row seats are now, and the market would be three guys at *C/D* who couldn't afford it?

FORD FALCON GT350

In October, Ford built its last Falcon sedan as Australian automotive production ceased. We'd bring the tooling stateside. Build most as taxicabs and cop cars, but let a few sneak out with Shelby GT350–style suspension, brake, and styling modifications, and the 526-hp flat-plane-crank Voodoo V-8 wailing in magnificence.

GMC SYCLONE II

For a parts-bin mutt, the 1991 GMC Syclone was astonishing. But it was based on the Sonoma—a horrible little truck. Its modern-day analogue, the Canyon, is not. Pack a crew cab with all-wheel drive and the Corvette Z06's 650-hp LT4 and maybe call it "Sycotic."

LEXUS LS500 TWIN TURBO

Stuff Lexus's flagship sedan with the V-12 from the Japan-only Toyota Century, fortify it with a pair of turbos, and aim for market domination. Imagine 650 horsepower as the model that announced Lexus's arrival back in 1989 rises beyond the Mercedes S-class, the BMW 7-series, and Marlon Brando's Polynesian island, Tetiaroa.

MERCEDES-BENZ G65 AMG 6X6

A six-wheeled G-wagen pickup with portal axles is incomplete insanity. Why only the V-8? Mercedes puts the spectacular 621-hp twin-turbo V-12 in the G65. Marry those two concepts and you've got the G-wagen for desert supremacy, or getting anywhere else in ultimate-overkill style.

PORSCHE 718 TURBO S

Boxster or Cayman, the 718's soul cries for the 580-hp flat-six from the 911 Turbo S. It would be so awesome that the Van Allen radiation belts would ignite and roast Earth like a brisket at Corky's Ribs & BBQ in Memphis. Global extinction never seemed so tempting.

RAM SRT10

Death stalks the Viper, but its heart is ripe for transplant. Cram that 645-hp V-10 back into the Ram 1500 pickup and revive the badass 2004–2006 Dodge Ram SRT10. If this blunt-object brute is too old school, then the 707-hp Hellcat V-8 would work, too. We could talk a few OPEC nations into paying for engineering.

SUBARU BRZ STI

Life has been hard for the dinky Toyobaru. What the BRZ needs is more breeze, namely some STI magic. Replacing its 205-hp naturally aspirated 2.0-liter with the WRX STI's turbocharged 305-hp 2.5 would also bump torque from a wheezy 156 pound-feet to 290. Smoky burnouts would become a BRZ.

illustrations by FÁBIO MARTINS

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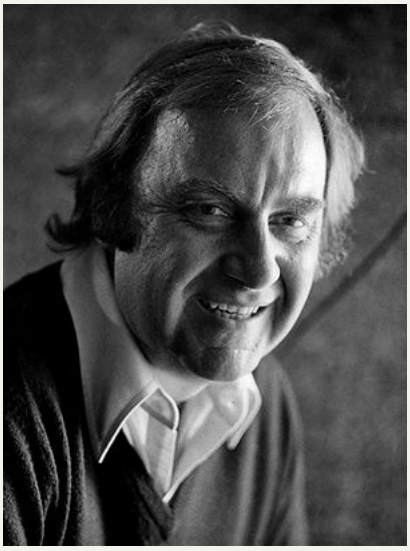
BROCK YATES

1933-2016

BROCK YATES—longtime *C/D* contributor, short-time editor-in-chief—died on October 5, 2016. He was 82. Yates had been dodging the slings and arrows of Alzheimer's disease for more than a decade. Official cause of death was complications from Alzheimer's—"He stopped breathing," says son Brock Jr.

Yates leaves behind his wife, Pamela, and children Brock Jr., Daniel, Claire Lilly, and Stacy Bradley.

Yates was born in Lockport, New York, in 1933, and his father, Raymond F. Yates, was both a writer and a car enthusiast. Raymond helped Brock, at age 16, compose a freelance article that was published in *Science and Mechanics* magazine. Yates's early rides were his father's, including an MG TD and a Jaguar XK120. He deployed the latter, as he put it, for "cruising through Hobart College with a 'Gentleman's C.'" He spent four years in the Navy, and one of his first freelance pieces for *C/D* appeared in 1961—a spoof suggesting that Stirling Moss was a robot. In all, Yates wrote for this magazine for more than four decades.



Even as he contributed to *C/D*, Yates became a sought-after broadcaster, working as a pit reporter for CBS's coverage of NASCAR races. He also worked at TNN Motor Sports for the *American Sports Cavalcade* show and at the Speed Channel. He wrote the screenplays for and was pivotal to the creation of three movies: *Smokey and the Bandit II* (1980); *Cannonball Run* (1981), in which he enjoyed a cameo as the event's organizer; and *Cannonball Run II* (1984). From those enterprises, he developed a lifelong friendship with stunt driver/director Hal Needham. Of greater consequence, he authored more than a dozen books, including three that rose to national attention: *Sunday Driver, The Critical Path,* and *Enzo Ferrari: The Man, the Cars, the Races, the Machine*, the last arguably the definitive narrative of the Italian automaker's acerbic founder.

For 35 years, Yates lived in upstate New York, in the village of Wyoming, where he and Pamela maintained the sprawling "Farmstead." Four years ago, he and Pamela relocated to Fairport, New York, to be closer to doctors and friends. Yates was never without a largish assortment of dogs, nor was he ever without a largish assortment of vintage racing machinery, with Offenhauser-powered sprint cars pegged as his favorites.

"In 1964, when I was first hired as managing editor at *C/D* by David E. Davis Jr.," Yates once recalled, "little did he know that in fact I knew nothing about managing or editing." Yet Yates became enthralled by what he called the magazine's "creative, outrageous verbal gymnastics." He greatly admired Gay Talese, Joe Eszterhas, and Hunter S. Thompson and was, as he put it, "electrified by the prose pyrotechnics of Tom Wolfe in particular." He added: "Pardon me for this heresy, but the launching pad for this magazine was not a better road test but rather the vitality of the written word as energized by operating in the world's center of literary and artistic creativity. And that was New York City."

Yates wowed his *C/D* colleagues with a 1968 critique called "The Grosse Pointe Myopians," alleging that the Big Three's arrogance and indifference had come to alienate their customers.

Yates never forgave Davis for moving *C/D*'s editorial offices to Michigan, which he called "our current hick digs." He nonetheless traveled to Ann Arbor five or six times annually—always driving, never flying—and he enthusiastically returned to the masthead in 1983, the same year as *C/D*'s first 10Best. He explained our selection of a Chevrolet Caprice Classic that year thus: "It was the 'Classic' part that swayed us."

Yates was editor-in-chief of *C/D* once, from February 1966 to October 1966. "I was surprised I lasted nine months," he said at his retirement party. Yates and Davis often feuded over what David E. called "Brock's various acts of sedition."

"I hold the distinct honor of being the person David fired most in his long and storied career," Yates said. "We were tough, opinionated sons of bitches who often went head to head, but at our core we loved and respected each other." Although they always settled their spats, Yates would add fuel to the fire whenever possible. In 1994, he wrote: "Dave remains the grand old water buffalo of automotive journalism. To know him is to acknowledge his short fuse and penchant for unpredictable, snorting charges at friendly targets." Yates once called *C/D*'s then executive editor to report: "Dave's on the hill behind my house, crawling on his stomach. He's got a shotgun."

In 1971, of course, Yates extended his legend by concocting the Cannonball Baker Sea-to-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash. He remembered its conception this way:

"Peg the start of the entire cockamamie affair at noon on a wintry day in New York, early 1971. I was on my way to lunch at Brew's Pub on 34th Street with Bob Brown, then the editor of Car and Driver, *and the late Leon Mandel, its senior editor. Walking near the magazine's One Park Avenue offices, it came to me: 'Why the hell not run a race across the United States?' A balls-out, shoot-the-moon, screw-the-establishment rumble from New York to Los Angeles to prove what we had been*

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harping about for years—that good drivers in good automobiles could employ the American interstate system the same way the Germans were using their autobahns. . . . The early '70s was a time when illegal acts were in style. . . . Everybody was paranoid about everything. What better time to add to the national psychosis?"

Between 1971 and 1979, five Cannonballs were completed. The initial cross-country trek was merely a reconnaissance, but in the first actual competition, Yates partnered with Dan Gurney in a Sunoco-blue Ferrari Daytona 365GTB/4, winning in just under 36 hours. In 1972, he entered a Cotton Owens–prepared Dodge Challenger that lost by 10 minutes to a bog-stock '73 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. The irony of that outcome tickled him endlessly. He kept the Challenger for the rest of his life.

"The Cannonball story . . . marked an end to the me-too-ism that characterized car magazines of the day," Yates opined. "It helped sever the cord between *Car and Driver* and its rivals, setting it on a course toward leadership." By 1984, he invented the more socially responsible One Lap of America, which continues to this day (as the Tire Rack One Lap of America) under the stewardship of Brock Jr.

Yates's contributions to this magazine helped enshrine the participatory journalism that was just beginning in the '70s. In 1976, he purchased, and had Ron Nash assemble, a kit-car Dodge Dart that he entered in the 24 Hours of Daytona with, among others, Buddy Baker. In the wee hours, Baker became bored and intentionally grenaded the 510-hp engine. Rarely deterred by life's setbacks, Yates roared when Baker—headed for the motel—said, "This time, Nash, even you *ain't* gonna fix it."

Yates also famously entered a 1970 Mustang Boss 302—a pristine example culled from Ford's press fleet—in an SCCA race at Watkins Glen, where the car suffered more than minor damage. Uniquely charismatic and charming, Yates placed a Monday-morning call to Dearborn that defused 90 percent of the executive angst and agitation. "It's a technique that's kept me out of jail for 40 years," he told the *C/D* staff after appearing in front of a judge who wanted to imprison him for speeding during a comparison test in 2001. His charm permitted him a measure of fearlessness.

Yates despised administrative and budgetary matters, instead sticking to his lifelong *C/D* mantra: "We drive cars." His primary rule for purchasing personal automobiles was to ignore their dynamic merits in favor of their potential for eccentric adventure.

If you'd asked Yates, he'd have told you that his most significant accomplishment was exceeding the expectations of his wordsmith father. But he was also relentlessly genial, inventive, and expressive. He was an imposing interviewer and riveting raconteur. He was a lifelong student of the English language, and his sense of humor bubbled warmly, even when circumstances were grim.

Yates was one-third of a triumvirate whose other legs comprised Davis and Patrick Bedard—the trio who first so colorfully imbued this magazine with the intelligence, independence, and irreverence that have made it a fiscal and literary success ever since. For that, none of us ever thanked Brock enough. —*John Phillips*

THE BEST OF BROCK YATES

TECHNICAL REPORT: MOSS MARK III, JUNE 1961

"The original plan was to locate a brilliant youth and train him intensively for several years. However such a prospect was not to be found and they were forced into their fantastic alternative: the *construction of the ultimate racing driver.*

"After rejecting a proposal for an out-and-out robot sloshed over with a heavy coat of B.R.G., the group decided their new device should look and act as a mortal . . . but would drive with flair, precision, and courage that no human could duplicate.

"The enterprise began with a grant of 500,000 pounds from the hush-hush Ministry of Speed Sports. A basic layout of the machine was set down by Dr. Reginald Wollstonecraft-Shelley, whose paternal grandmother, Mary Godwin-Shelley, had been a pioneer in the field.

". . . The machine was named 'Stirling Moss' for several reasons. 'Stirling,' despite the modified spelling, symbolized the integrity of the English pound and the Empire. 'Moss' simply stood for 'Ministry of Speed Sports.'"

THE GROSSE POINTE MYOPIANS, APRIL 1968

"The future of the automobile as we know it is in jeopardy? Who speaks such heresy? Better that you challenge the sanity of the Constitution or the virtue of our Gold Star Mothers. Isn't the automobile business America's—yes, the world's—greatest industry?

". . . Automobiles are becoming a pain in the neck to sizable numbers of average folks who once felt they were the *only* status symbols worth possessing. Now the great middle class is being romanced by the airlines ('We want everyone to fly,' coos Eastern), trips around the world, swimming pools in the backyard, second homes in the mountains, skiing trips, and a chance to join a country club, and *two* boats in the local marina.

". . . Faced with this immense challenge, the automen are viewing the future with the distinctive brand of tunnel vision that has set their industry aside from all others for the past five decades. The provincial attitudes that pervade the Detroit scene stifle self-criticism and leave the industry's leaders uniquely ill-equipped to face new

situations, or to adjust to the shocking theory that they may become as *passé* as the men who committed their lives to the manufacture of buggy whips."

IMPERIAL LEBARON, APRIL 1969

"You say you aren't interested in the Imperial? Your tastes run to smaller, more nimble cars, and you vow that your arteries will be hardened and your brain softened beyond all repair before you would consider a lumbering, 4-tired sloth like the Imperial LeBaron 4-door hardtop?

"Of course. A perfectly understandable response for a reader of zoomie car magazines. We who represent the modern genre of sporty-car types and street racers have long exhibited a disdain for automobiles from the species *Luxurious Maximus*, mainly because they are so deeply identified with the most smug hidebound elements of the American fat-cat establishment. Even myself—once known widely as a placid, law-abiding youth—harbored within my soul a hatred for cars of this type from the moment I began to find automobiles a source of interest. I confess that the Cadillac became an early symbol of my growing disaffection with the Ike and Mamie Good Life, and by the time I reached my early twenties I despised each example of that marque as if it had been sold (at a huge profit) by that cartel headquartered by Norman Vincent Peale, Pat Boone and the staff of the *Reader's Digest*.

"God, how I hated those Caddys. Those blow-hard Rotarians and their jelly-chin wives in the rimless glasses and the Mamie Eisenhower hats and the orthopedic shoes, waddling around in their shark-fin Fleetwoods, measuring the passing scene with a brand of beady-eyed All-American materialism that would make Midas himself blush."

THE CANNONBALL BAKER SEA-TO-SHINING-SEA MEMORIAL TROPHY DASH, MARCH 1972

"Those damn fools, they went and did it. Shortly after midnight on the 15th of November, 1971, six outlandish vehicles, manned by 16 even more outlandish drivers, co-drivers, navigators, mechanics—and a TWA stewardess, for God's sake—scattered out of the Red Ball Garage on East 31st Street in New York City and headed west. A few hours passed and two more entrants joined the chase—a coast-to-coast epic that will be remembered as the Cannonball Baker Sea-to-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash. Eight vehicles in all, 23 lunatics.

"Less than a day-and-a-half later (six minutes less to be precise), the first car, a mud-streaked Ferrari Daytona, yowled into the parking lot of the Portofino Inn in the marina of Redondo Beach, California, 2863 miles from New York.

"... The concept had been refreshing in its simplicity. Whereas every automotive competition in the world is encumbered by a thicket of confusing rules, the Cannonball Baker had but one—'All competitors will drive any vehicle of their choosing, over any route, at any speed they judge practical, between the starting point and destination. The competitor finishing with the lowest elapsed time is the winner.' There were no other rules."

NORTHWEST PASSAGE, FEBRUARY 1976

"We have heard talk about the expertise of the Alaska Highway truckers but have not been prepared for the visual jolt of cresting a hill on a rutted dirt road barely two lanes wide only to be confronted by a 60-foot Diesel 18-wheeler rushing toward us at 70 mph. They operate with the kind of intelligent abandon that comes with the knowledge that they will pay for their own mistakes. The piles of wreckage lying at the bottom of deep ravines are proof that The Highway does not tolerate incompetence or imprudence. There are no cops hovering behind bushes like scolding headmasters, no guard rails, no stoplights, no speed-limit signs, no ambulance-chasing lawyers yelping 'whiplash,' no external rules whatsoever. The government of British Columbia maintains this sparse roadway as well as it can, but safe travel is up to the individual driver. Mistakes can be ugly and deadly. Help is far away. It is conceivable that one could fly off a bend into the bush and lie there until he got better.

"... Texans may brag about the openness of their state, but compared to this place, West Texas looks like downtown Calcutta. Our sense of movement is stunted. The initial delight of running on dirt when it was smooth and dry has given way to depression and frustration that hundreds of miles of switchbacks and humps and serpentine curves, crawling around brooding mountains and wandering through trackless timberlands, are ahead. It is hard to comprehend the mental state of men who once *walked* this way, scratching through these thickets at the rate of a handful of miles a day. What has our speed done for us? Beside create urges for more speed."

BACK TO THE STREETS, MOTHER! OCTOBER 1976

"Joe's out tonight. So are a few other heavies, mainly that kid from Royal Oak with the Challenger—a goddamn *pro stocker* sitting right here in the parking lot of the Nugget Restaurant—and everybody is milling around, waiting, fantasizing, vibrating with anticipation over the moment when Joe will get into his sinewy little silver Mustang II and head out onto I-696 to run that Mopar. By God, they're going to do it; they've *got* to do it, for the sake of the guys who've driven in from all over Detroit, all the guys who are prepared to stand around for most of the night in the parking lot of the Nugget dealing with the central subject of their lives: the preservation and prosperity of that uniquely American brand of automotive anarchy, street racing. Joe has got to run that Mopar. He is The Man; he is maybe the king of the street racers, and it is clear that he did not drive out to the Nugget parking lot to stand around and take the night air in Farmington, Michigan."

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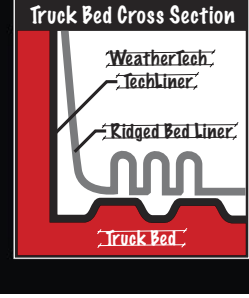

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INSPIRED BY GREAT HISTORICAL CONFLICTS—FROM THE BATTLE OF MARATHON IN 490 B.C. TO THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY TO HULK HOGAN VS. ANDRÉ THE GIANT IN WRESTLEMANIA III—WE DECIDED TO SHAKE UP THIS YEAR'S 10BEST.

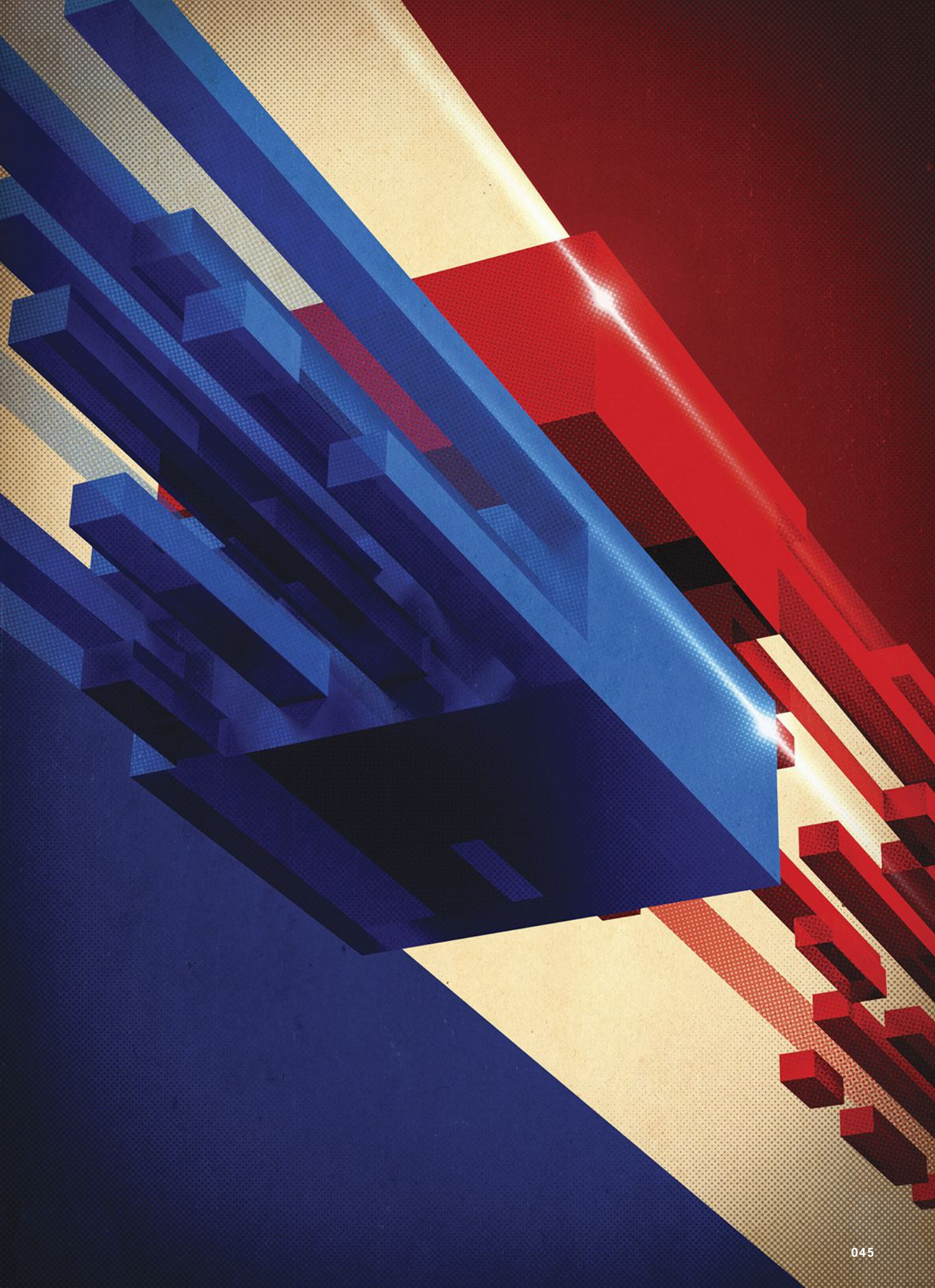
VS

We started by expanding our driving regimen from one week to two. Rather than throw contenders en masse against returning winners, we held back the incumbents. Assessing only the challengers during Week One, we picked a first cut of 10 favorites to face last year's winners in a second week of driving. As ever, nothing with a base price higher than $80,000 could compete, based on our belief that it shouldn't be all that tough for an automaker to produce greatness at more than twice the cost of the average car.

Pitting the 10Best challengers against the 10Best incumbents gave us time to get to know all the vehicles intimately. It created more opportunities to drive more cars back to back, even those that might, on the surface, seem mismatched. These pairings, in turn, drew out deeper contrasts in the three criteria that we use to evaluate potential 10Besters: driving engagement, value, and mission fulfillment.

Finally, we decided to devote commensurately more pages to the Battle for 10Best. What follow are three sections: The first lays out the field for Week One; the second presents a tale of the tape for Week Two; and in the third, we report on the key matchups that drew us toward consensus on this year's winners.

illustration by TAVIS COBURN



THE NEW BLOOD

IN SOME TRANSACTIONS, buying the newest and freshest implies that you're buying the best. Smartphones get faster, appliances become more efficient, and sushi—well, sushi doesn't age well.

Cars are not on that list. They're simply too complex to declare that a car's newness guarantees its goodness. 10Best rewards enduring excellence, not fleeting novelty. That's why, ever since the first 10Best in 1983, every subsequent list has carried over winners from the prior year. And while that process has been in place from the beginning, the structure of this year's testing emphasizes the event's guiding philosophy.

002

003

001

Every one of the 33 cars showing up for Week One is new to the market in some form, and each will have to prove itself under intense scrutiny if it's going to stick around for Week Two, let alone knock a car off last year's list. The anticipation is highest for the freshest of this bunch, the 14 all-new ones—virginal nameplates and ground-up redesigns—that have never faced a 10Best gantlet before. Sure, they're unproven, but unlike the retreads and the second chances on the following pages, this new blood also doesn't have a history of, well, losing.

004

Occasionally, these models are so new that 10Best marks our first exposure to them. Take the Genesis G90, which was unknown to every one of our drivers save for senior online editor Mike Sutton, who pulled the first-drive assignment. With either its carryover 5.0-liter V-8 or a new twin-turbocharged 3.3-liter V-6, the car formerly known as the Hyundai Equus makes a first impression unlike any Korean car to come before it, thanks to lush leather, the convincing brushed-metal simulation of its switchgear, and a back seat fit for a Gulfstream.

We keep the 10Best rules to a minimum and simply let the best rise to the top. Contenders must have a base price of $80,000 or less, be on sale in January 2017, and show up for our September testing. That's it. Price-wise, our batch of newcomers is bookended by the Chevrolet Cruze, which starts at $17,850, and the $66,695 Jaguar XF S, which is far newer than it looks. Most entrants, however, are represented by well-equipped models that inflate their window stickers, some beyond our $80,000 cap.

Both the Audi A4 and the Jaguar XE are loaded with more than $10,000 in extras and are vying to fill the void left when the BMW 3-series departed our list in 2015. There are no categories in 10Best, but a list for discerning drivers seems as if it ought to have an entry-luxury sports sedan, the segment tailor-made for discerning drivers. Audi's high-tech A4 is quiet, comfortable, and slightly anodyne. The Jaguar's composed chassis impresses, although both the supercharged

photography by A.J. MUELLER

HOPE RUNS HIGHEST FOR THE GROUND-UP REDESIGNS AND THE ALL-NEW NAMEPLATES TRYING TO DETHRONE THE 10 PROVEN WINNERS. ***BY ERIC TINGWALL***

005

006

007

008

009

3.0-liter V-6 and the diesel-burning 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder lack the polish of great powertrains.

Each of our 34 voters will distill each car they drive to a single score out of a possible 100 points. We are guided by three criteria: driving engagement, value, and mission fulfillment. This is how we park Chevys side by side with Jags and still end up with a list that isn't just the 10 most expensive or the top 10 performers. The winners change every year, and yet the list is always essentially the same: a diverse group of 10 cars on which we would happily spend our own money.

The three-building burg of Hell, Michigan, is a long way from the press-junket capitals of southern Spain and Napa. Hell is a word printed on a map that exists to sell screen-printed tchotchkes and serve as a pit stop along the roads that are equal parts entertaining and punishing. Two years ago, portions of the 10Best loop were so cratered that we almost voted a 45-year-old moon rover onto the list.

For a supposedly dead segment, there sure were a lot of all-new sedans at this year's 10Best. They include: Chevrolet Cruze (001), Genesis G90 (002), Jaguar XF S (003), Audi A4 (004), Volvo S90 (005), Cadillac CT6 (006), Mercedes-Benz E300 (007), Jaguar XE (008), and Buick LaCrosse (009).

With the economy on the upswing, though, the chip seal in rural Michigan now flows like Bell's Oberon Ale. The layer of loose aggregate pressed into tacky tar is the civil-engineering equivalent of draping a bedsheet over a pile of Lego bricks. It takes the sting off potholes and frost heaves and leaves a smoothed-over topography of dips, grooves, and bulges. The 13.5-mile loop isn't quite the chassis torture test of prior years, but it remains a constant exercise in body control and damping behavior between the curves and undulations that expose a car's handling traits.

The fact that we're in the backyard of GM's Milford Proving Grounds is palpable through the steering wheels of both the twin-turbo and naturally aspirated six-cylinder Cadillac CT6s. Following in tracks rubbered in by the ATS and the CTS, the big Cad is a masterpiece of chassis development with righteous steering feel. And just like its brethren, the CT6's interior appears to be made from Buick's leftovers.

You might say the opposite of the sybaritic Volvo S90. The Swedish comeback car was seemingly built around open-pore

THE NEW BLOOD

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walnut trim, a clever vertical touchscreen, and seats that soak up stress. The Mercedes-Benz E300 4MATIC splits the difference between the Cadillac and the Volvo with an elegant, modern cockpit and confident, if not athletic, manners.

There's a pair of big sedans that exist in the often-overlooked space between affordable family transport and luxury cars. Both the Buick LaCrosse and the Kia Cadenza are spacious, comfortable, and convincingly upscale, like those sweatpants made to look like dress slacks. At almost $45,000 as tested, they also ask premium prices without the prestige of a proper high-end brand.

The Fiat 124 Spider Abarth invites extra curiosity, being based on a returning 10Best winner but also existing as an entirely different thing. The Italian roadster points out that the Miata is not without flaws, even as it openly displays its own. It corners flatter than its fraternal twin, but the stiff suspension that keeps roll in check also sends quivers through its structure.

Some cars draw compelling comparisons with their own kind. A tester could devote hours to exploring the differences among a trio of Hyundai Elantras with three different powertrains: the 40-highway-mpg Eco, the top-trim Limited model with a naturally aspirated 2.0-liter four-cylinder, and the ambitious Sport model that targets that 10Best stalwart, the Volkswagen GTI, with a 201-hp turbo four.

Then there are the cars that have no clear analogue at 10Best. The Chevrolet Bolt is another one so new that it's hardly ever parked for longer than it takes to switch drivers. The 238-mile, $37,495 battery-electric presents an idea for the future as only General Motors could dream it, looking like any other shoe-box compact. Maybe that's not a bad thing, though. Without the frippery or flash of a Tesla, any accolades will be borne of substance.

The Bolt is accompanied by the plug-in-hybrid Chevrolet Volt, a one-year 10Best winner in 2011. This second-generation car appears to be designed for longer-lasting appeal, having grown out of its gawky looks and quieted the gas engine to the point that it is virtually imperceptible.

The newness of these cars, parked amid the rest of the field in the sandy lot at 10Best headquarters, fades quickly. Every car here carries equal weight and receives equal scrutiny. New is what got these cars invited, but it won't get them onto the VIP list.

Newcomers also included one roadster, an electric car, a plug-in hybrid, and a couple of reformulated and reinvigorated Korean sedans. They were: Fiat 124 Spider Abarth (001), Chevrolet Bolt (002), Hyundai Elantra (003), Kia Cadenza (004), and Chevrolet Volt (005).

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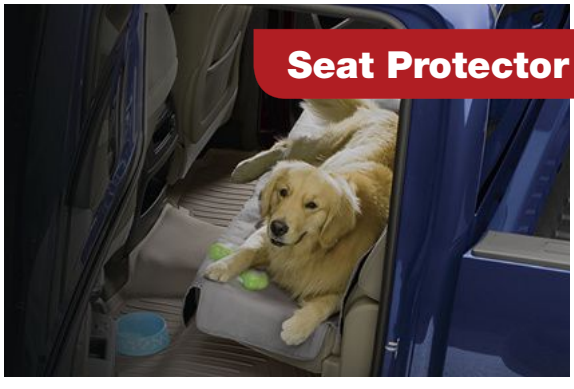

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THE RETREADS

EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THAT CARS come from factories, moving down assembly lines to pop out fresh and shiny and ready to be shipped to your local dealership. But the process starts long before the blue-collar types get involved. And your $399-a-month lease payment actually begins life as a different number—or, more accurately, a whole lot of numbers on huge spreadsheets that represent an automaker's product plan. No car these days exists in a world unto itself; even the best represents a series of compromises by marketers, designers, finance guys, and engineers.

001

002

003

Sometimes this means that new models get launched before they're truly finished, as is the case with the Infiniti Q50. We first hammered this sports sedan around the 10Best loop for the 2014 edition. The all-new Q50 replaced the venerable G37 sedan that year, but it continued to use Nissan's two-decade-old VQ V-6, which impressed us only as a historical artifact. This year, the debut of a twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6 means the Q50 is finally a finished product. With 400 horsepower and an upgraded steer-by-wire system, the 2017 Q50 was a welcome participant at 10Best.

It's one of eight cars to return in an altered state this year. They enthusiastically tout new powertrains, trim configurations, or other specification changes. Yet coming back juiced in the middle of their product cycles, these cars face a great challenge, not just at 10Best, but in the marketplace at large. They're not really new, so it can be hard to convince an apathetic public (or writer) to take another look. Some hardly merit a second glance, such as the 2016 Volkswagen Passat that arrived at 10Best a little sleeker and with a longer list of features than it had five years ago but riding on the same old architecture.

Others come about as the result of customer and media feedback loops, upgraded to address previous shortcomings. The Lincoln MKZ was dinged in the 2014 10Best competition for lacking both the interior polish and an engine worthy of a true luxury car. It came back this year with a horror-film sequel's vengeance: a new 3.0-liter twin-turbo V-6 putting 400 horsepower to the pavement through all four wheels. The Mini Cooper Clubman, which is now a legitimate four-door compact car of non-miniature size, showed that Mini has been listening to its customers. That the Clubman rides much better

"COMING BACK JUICED IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR PRODUCT CYCLES, THESE CARS FACE A GREAT CHALLENGE, NOT JUST AT 10BEST, BUT IN THE MARKETPLACE AT LARGE."

photography by A.J. MUELLER

AS REJIGGERED VERSIONS OF MODELS THAT FAILED TO WIN A 10BEST TROPHY IN AN EARLIER ITERATION, THESE ENTRIES ARE THE UNDERDOGS OF THE COMPETITION. ***BY JEFF SABATINI***

004

005

006

007

008

than the Cooper Hardtop we had at last year's 10Best—and has more felicitous steering than most rear-drive BMWs—means perhaps Mini is listening to us as well.

The Mini was not the only model that reappeared, perennial-like, sporting a different number of doors. We again embraced the naked power of Mercedes-AMG's C63 S, which offers 503 horsepower in a frisky rear-drive coupe with a six-figure as-tested price that makes last year's sedan version, base price of $75,875, seem a bargain. At the other end of the pricing spectrum sits the Chevrolet Malibu hybrid, a car so frugal that we imagine a typical buyer cashing in savings bonds and the contents of at least two childhood piggy banks to come up with its $28,750 asking price. We passed on a much more expensive non-hybrid Malibu last year.

And then there are the new sport trims: an Audi TTS and a Ford Fusion Sport. The Audi arrived exactly on its Germanic product-planning schedule, introduced a year after the redesigned, third-generation TT. It brings horsepower and handling bumps and gives last year's characterless sports car the opportunity to grow a personality. The Fusion Sport, coming along four years after this Fusion first competed in 2013's 10Best, seems less the realization of a comprehensive plan than something that happened when some Blue Oval engineers were bench-racing over pitchers of Labatt. With the 325-hp 2.7-liter EcoBoost V-6 borrowed from the F-150 under its hood and summer rubber on all four driven wheels, it's certainly built for turning quick quarter-miles.

Of course, the most important question for any competition—a drag race or otherwise—is whom will you have to beat? The rules of 10Best are as evenhanded as we can make them, even more so this time, yet there's no denying that the process can seem unfair. Some models are one-and-done, never to return, leaving us to wonder if they might have fared better against a different crop of machines. Some years have more competitors; some years have better ones.

These are the fortunate cars whose renegotiated compromises qualify them for another 10Best lap and a shot at 10Best glory.

The vehicles searching for a second lease on life at this year's competition are: Lincoln MKZ (001), Chevrolet Malibu hybrid (002), Mini Cooper Clubman (003), Mercedes-AMG C63 S coupe (004), Ford Fusion Sport (005), Infiniti Q50 (006), Audi TTS (007), and Volkswagen Passat (008).

SECOND CHANCES

IT'S DAMNED HARD to make our 10Best Cars list. A contender must execute its mission at the highest level and deliver a driving experience somewhere between sublime and messianic. And then that car has to be demonstrably better than one of the 10 returning winners to secure a spot, which is no small feat. But it's even harder for a usurped vehicle to reclaim its crown after losing it, as it's rare that we invite a vehicle back prior to a generational redesign. Nevertheless, we had a passel of former—though not last year's—10Best honorees show up this year, including the BMW 3-series, the Chevy Corvette, the Ford Focus, and the Subaru BRZ/Toyota 86.

001

002

003

BMW's sports sedan tripped over its own tires and fell off our 10Best list in 2015 for the first time in more than two decades, largely due to soulless steering and a lineup-wide emphasis shift toward mass appeal. But we brought it back because of a comprehensive mid-cycle refresh that spanned the past two model years and brought in retuned steering, updated suspension hardware and geometry, a plug-in-hybrid model, and all-new four- and six-cylinder engines. All are changes intended to reinvigorate BMW's diluted driving machine.

The awesomeness of the current C7-generation Corvette has never been in question, and it was named a 10Best winner for 2014 and 2015 because of its tactility and supercar-shaming performance. The base Stingray can deliver as much as 1.08 g's of grip and stops from 70 mph in a retina-stretching 136 feet. The zero-to-60-mph acceleration dips well into the threes. So, yeah, this is a car we still love dearly. But it fell from favor after a C7 Stingray needed two engines, two starters, two HVAC control units, and new transaxle seals, among other items, to complete a 40,000-mile long-term test. We couldn't in good conscience award the Corvette again after that debacle.

Still, this year brought an intriguing new member of the C7 brood in the form of the Grand Sport, which combines the aggressive aero and chassis tricks of the Z06 (which exceeds our price cap, sadly) with the Stingray's naturally aspirated small-block V-8. GM appears to have addressed the ills that plagued our long-termer, and the GS promises to be a transcendent Corvette.

We've had an on-again/off-again relationship with the Ford Focus since it first arrived as a 2000 model and promptly ripped off five consecutive 10Best appearances. Ford let the same basic Focus hang on so long, however, that it witnessed not only the Kiss Farewell Tour, but the seven Kiss tours after that. An all-new model

"IT'S HARD—BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE—TO GET BACK ON THE 10BEST LIST. EXCELLENCE TENDS TO REMAIN EXCELLENT. EACH OF THESE CARS HAD IT ONCE."

photography by A.J. MUELLER

FOUR FORMER 10BEST WINNERS TRY TO SNEAK THEIR REMIXES BACK ONTO THE CHARTS. ***BY ERIK JOHNSON***

It might be true that you can't go home again, but it is at least possible for a vehicle to nab another 10Best award after falling off the list. Here are the four former winners vying to grab another trophy: Subaru BRZ (001), BMW 330i (002), Ford Focus RS (003), and Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport (004).

finally showed up for 2012 and once again redefined small-car greatness. We called it "America's supercompact" and promptly shipped two more 10Best trophies to Dearborn, including one for the hot-hatch Focus ST. But then the current Mazda 3 happened, beating the Ford in a head-to-head comparison test and taking the Focus's place alongside the Volkswagen Golf as one of our favorite compact cars. There's no better way to draw our interest than a new performance variant, however, and the hard-core, all-wheel-drive Focus RS is very interesting indeed. This year's 10Best competition was our first experience on American roads with this hottest of hatches after promising exposures in Europe and at Virginia International Raceway.

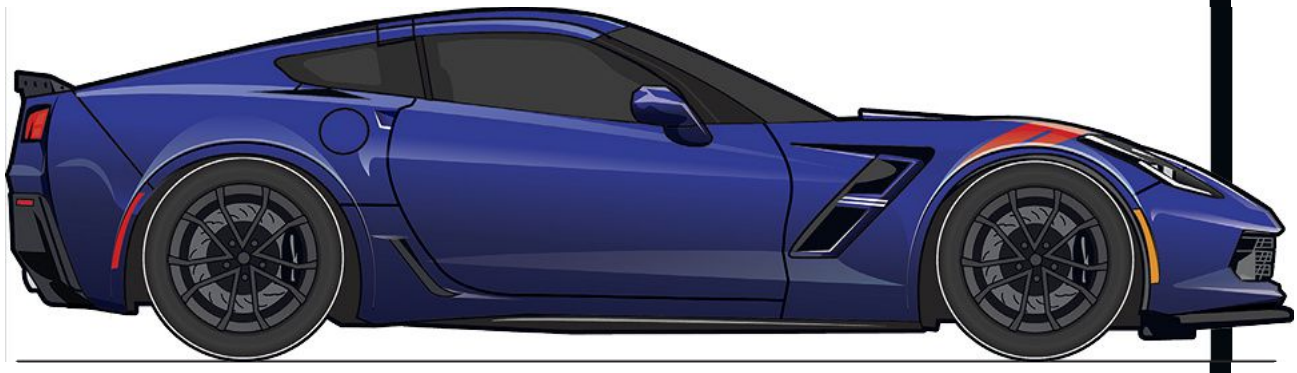
The final model in our quadrumvirate of second-chancers is actually two cars: the Subaru BRZ and its Toyota 86 clone. You know the 86 as the Scion FR-S that shared a 2013 award with the Subie. But Scion is deader than dead, and the FR-S has been rebadged. These coupes also received mild aesthetic tweaks, slight power and torque bumps for manual-transmission versions, and minor suspension revisions meant to make them more livable daily drivers.

It's hard—but not impossible—to get back on the 10Best list. Excellence tends to remain excellent. Each of these cars had it once.

THE CHALLENGERS

Week One is over, and the doughnuts are but mere artery putty at this point. What we're left with, besides pre-diabetic conditions, is our first cut—those standout cars amid 2017's new crop we've deemed good enough for The Big Show. On the following pages, we present each new entry by its numbers, along with our best justifications for its presence in Week Two.

VS



2017 CHEVROLET CORVETTE GRAND SPORT

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: the Grand Sport is so intoxicating in so many ways—power, grip, looks, fiberglass odor—it made us forget all the problems we had with our long-term Stingray.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door targa or convertible
BASE PRICE: $66,445–$70,445
ENGINE: pushrod 16-valve 6.2-liter V-8, 460 hp, 465 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 7-speed manual, 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 106.7 in
LENGTH: 177.9 in • **WIDTH:** 77.4 in
HEIGHT: 48.6 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 52 cu ft
CARGO VOLUME: 10–15 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

Grand Sport (6.2-liter V-8, 7-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 3.9 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 8.9 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.3 sec @ 117 mph
TOP SPEED: 175 mph (*C/D* est)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 136 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 1.13 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3463 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 19/16/25 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 16 mpg

Grand Sport w/ Z07 (6.2-liter V-8, 7-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 3.8 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 8.7 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.2 sec @ 117 mph
TOP SPEED: 175 mph (*C/D* est)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 129 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 1.18 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3452 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 19/16/25 mpg

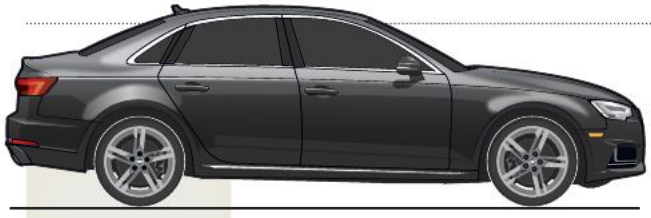
"It's like swimming in an ocean of torque. The sheer brawn of the Grand Sport is astonishing. And there's so much grip it feels like you could park it on the ceiling."
—JOHN PEARLEY HUFFMAN, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

2017 CHEVROLET BOLT

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: unlike the millennial hipsters it is designed to impress, the Bolt does not complain about doing more than expected—in this case, travel farther than 200 miles on a charge.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-motor, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door hatchback
BASE PRICE: $37,495
MOTOR: permanent-magnet synchronous AC electric motor, 200 hp, 266 lb-ft
BATTERY: liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 60 kWh
TRANSMISSION: 1-speed direct drive
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 102.4 in
LENGTH: 164.0 in
WIDTH: 69.5 in
HEIGHT: 62.8 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 94 cu ft
CARGO VOLUME: 17 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH: 6.5 sec
ZERO TO 90 MPH: 13.2 sec
1/4-MILE: 15.0 sec @ 93 mph
TOP SPEED: 93 mph
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 181 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.78 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3569 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 119/128/110 MPGe
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 96 MPGe



2017 AUDI A4 2.0T QUATTRO

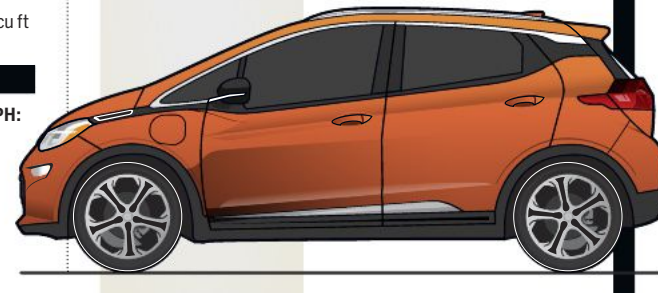
MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: sometimes on the drive home you just want an anodyne, don't-talk-to-me, do-everything luxury sports sedan.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $40,350 • **ENGINE:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4, 252 hp, 273 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSION:** 7-speed dual-clutch automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 111.0 in
LENGTH: 186.1 in • **WIDTH:** 72.5 in
HEIGHT: 55.8 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 94 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 13 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.2 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 13.9 sec • **1/4-MILE:** 13.9 sec @ 100 mph
TOP SPEED: 130 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 155 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.90 g • **CURB WEIGHT:** 3671 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 27/24/31 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 22 mpg

"The A4 is extremely well-executed if a little boring. It's easy to drive hard and always composed."
—ANNIE WHITE, BUYER'S GUIDE ASSISTANT EDITOR

"It's hard to find any significant flaws with the Bolt, other than its looks."
—JOSEPH CAPPARELLA, ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR



illustrations by PETE SUCHESKI

THE CHALLENGERS

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2017 GENESIS G90

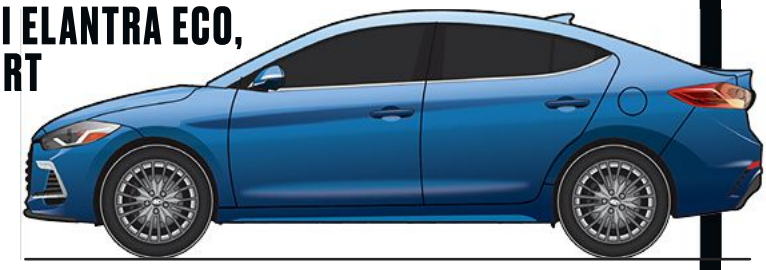
MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: we like honest cars, and the G90 never pretends to be anything more than a big, fast luxury yacht.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear- or all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $69,050–$73,150
ENGINES: twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve 3.3-liter V-6, 365 hp, 376 lb-ft; DOHC 32-valve 5.0-liter V-8, 420 hp, 383 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 124.4 in
LENGTH: 204.9 in
WIDTH: 75.4 in
HEIGHT: 58.9 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 113 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 16 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

G90 HTRAC (3.3-liter V-6, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.3 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 14.0 sec
1/4-MILE: 14.0 sec @ 100 mph
TOP SPEED: 147 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 172 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.85 g*
CURB WEIGHT: 4824 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 20/17/24 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 18 mpg
**Stability-control inhibited.*

G90 (5.0-liter V-8, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.3 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 12.6 sec
1/4-MILE: 13.8 sec @ 105 mph
TOP SPEED: 148 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 179 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.83 g
CURB WEIGHT: 4647 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 19/16/24 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 17 mpg

2017 HYUNDAI ELANTRA ECO, ELANTRA SPORT



MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: the Elantra delivers a one-two punch of a highly efficient Eco model and a robustly upgraded Sport.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $21,485–$26,000 (est)
ENGINES: turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 1.4-liter inline-4, 128 hp, 156 lb-ft; turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 1.6-liter inline-4, 201 hp, 195 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 7-speed dual-clutch automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 106.3 in
LENGTH: 179.9 in
WIDTH: 70.9 in
HEIGHT: 56.5 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 96 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 14 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

Elantra Eco (1.4-liter I-4, 7-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 7.8 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 21.9 sec
1/4-MILE: 16.2 sec @ 87 mph
TOP SPEED: 120 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 173 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.80 g
CURB WEIGHT: 2854 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 35/32/40 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 38 mpg

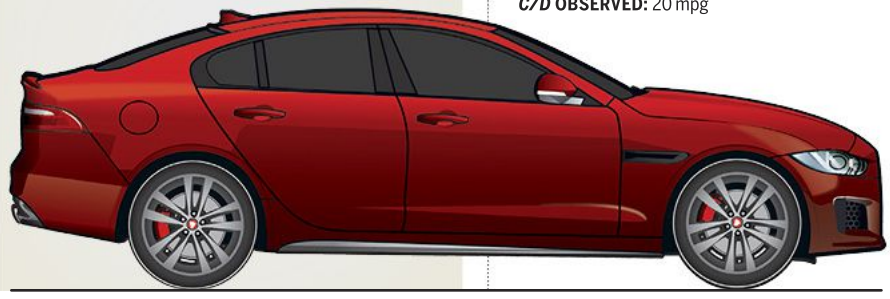
2017 JAGUAR XE 35t

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: we still want to love a compact sports sedan, and the XE chassis reminds us of an old BMW 3-series.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear- or all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $42,695–$45,195
ENGINE: supercharged DOHC 24-valve 3.0-liter V-6, 340 hp, 332 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSION:** 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 111.6 in • **LENGTH:** 184.5 in
WIDTH: 72.8 in • **HEIGHT:** 55.7–56.1 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 93 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 15 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

XE 3.5t R-Sport AWD (3.0-liter V-6, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.8 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 11.9 sec
1/4-MILE: 13.4 sec @ 105 mph
TOP SPEED: 123 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 147 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.93 g
CURB WEIGHT: 4036 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 23/20/29 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 20 mpg

"The Jaguar XE is so close to greatness, but . . ."
—EZRA DYER, CAROLINAS EDITOR



"What the Genesis G90 most lacks is badge prestige."
—JOSH JACQUOT, REVIEWS EDITOR

2017 CHEVROLET MALIBU HYBRID

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: no other hybrid draws less attention to its electrification system, visually or mechanically. • **VEHICLE TYPE:** front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan • **BASE PRICE:** $28,750
POWERTRAIN: DOHC 16-valve 1.8-liter inline-4, 122 hp, 129 lb-ft; 2 permanent-magnet synchronous AC electric motors, 102 and 74 hp; combined system, 182 hp, 277 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSION:** continuously variable automatic
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 111.4 in • **LENGTH:** 193.8 in • **WIDTH:** 73.0 in **HEIGHT:** 57.7 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 103 cu ft • **TRUNK VOLUME:** 12 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH: 7.3 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 20.2 sec • **1/4-MILE:** 15.6 sec @ 90 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 100 mph (governor limited) • **BRAKING, 70–0 MPH:** 175 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.84 g • **CURB WEIGHT:** 3348 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 46/49/43 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 38 mpg

WHERE'S THE FOCUS RS?

WHY FORD'S HOTTEST HATCH, WHICH SEEMED A SHOO-IN FOR 10BEST ACCOLADES, FAILED EVEN TO MAKE THE FIRST CUT. BY EZRA DYER

The Ford Focus RS? It's back at the prison yard, its work-release program suspended after it shanked a guard and went drift mode across the warden's lawn. This is a car that inks its own tats, and some of them are on its face.

It's not that we don't appreciate the Focus RS, a car built to satisfy a hard-core niche of driving enthusiasts, the ones who know who Kalle Grundel is and daydream about importing a Lancia Delta Integrale. We love that there's a Focus with 350 horsepower and all-wheel drive. But sometimes more is just more. The Focus RS is a contestant on *The Voice* who sings at 126 decibels. It's a Gillette razor with seven blades. It's Joey Chestnut eating 25 pastrami sandwiches in 10 minutes. Oh, we're definitely impressed. But you can be impressed by Joey Chestnut, we suppose, without necessarily wanting to marry him.

Those staffers who've flogged the Focus RS on racetracks found that the mean streets of Michigan bring out a much different side of the car's personality. In the context of 10Best testing, which includes roads that are paved entirely with frost heaves, the Focus's playful brattiness turns ugly. Over bumpy sections of the 10Best loop, the suspension feels as if it's made of pogo sticks. The optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires, which help the RS deliver 1.04 g's of grip, hunt and wander on rutted pavement. Its Recaros were evidently molded around Popeye's longtime girlfriend, Olive Oyl. One driver likened the tilted-back seating position to a dentist's chair; another gratuitously invoked the word "coxswain." If your Lululemon pants are stretched near to transparent, you'll certainly want to find a different car.

Drift mode, the RS's most curious performance feature, represents the conundrum presented by more for the sake of more. Yes, we want to encourage engineers to indulge their whimsy, especially when they're explicitly endorsing juvenile tire-smoking behavior. And yet . . . drift mode produces understeer as often as it does sideways antics. Meanwhile, when we tried to kick the tail out the old-fashioned way—a dose of revs and a clutch drop—the instrument cluster flashed the panicky message: "All-wheel-drive system not available." This is a message that we've never seen in, say, a Subaru or an Audi. And it underscores the fact that the Focus RS's all-wheel-drive system is a retrofit, installed to cope with all that *more* under the hood. It can't always do it.

The truly great cars, the 10Best winners, are of a piece. The Focus RS gives you no peace. But hey, it's not like Ford tried to build a holistic driving machine or sweat the nuances. What it set out to do was inflate the Focus with nitromethane vapors until it was within a millimeter of popping. Mission accomplished. That approach makes for an interesting car, and a special one. But not one of the 10Best.

1.04 g's

"IT HAS LOTS OF GRIP, LOTS OF POWER, LOTS OF NOISE, LOTS OF FUN, BUT I HAVE ONLY MINIMAL DESIRE TO OWN IT."
–Tony Quiroga, senior editor

photograph by A.J. MUELLER

THE CHALLENGERS

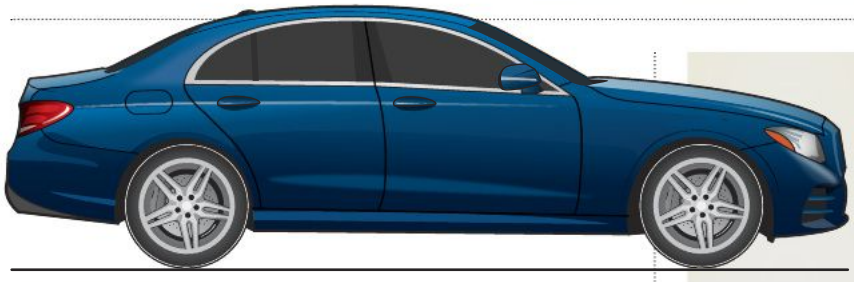
2017 VOLVO S90 T6 AWD

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: a) Interior and exterior styling. b) It's gorgeous. c) Have you looked at the thing? d) All of the above.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan • **BASE PRICE:** $53,945 • **ENGINE:** turbocharged, supercharged, and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4; 316 hp, 295 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSION:** 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode • **DIMENSIONS** **WHEELBASE:** 115.8 in **LENGTH:** 195.4 in • **WIDTH:** 74.0 in • **HEIGHT:** 56.8 in **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 98 cu ft • **TRUNK VOLUME:** 14 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.6 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 13.9 sec **1/4-MILE:** 14.1 sec @ 101 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 133 mph (governor limited) • **BRAKING, 70–0 MPH:** 161 ft **ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD:** 0.90 g **CURB WEIGHT:** 4037 lb • **FUEL ECONOMY** **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 25/22/31 mpg • ***C/D*** **OBSERVED:** 22 mpg

"The first time I hopped behind the wheel, the S90 prompted me to download a software update. That's the future, like it or not."
—JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR



2017 MERCEDES-BENZ E300

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: it delivers the Mercedes promise of technological superiority in a richly appointed package.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear- or all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $53,075 • **ENGINE:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4, 241 hp, 273 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSION:** 9-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 115.7 in **LENGTH:** 193.8 in • **WIDTH:** 72.9 in **HEIGHT:** 57.8 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 104 cu ft **TRUNK VOLUME:** 13 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

E300 4MATIC (2.0-liter I-4, 9-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 6.5 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 17.8 sec
1/4-MILE: 15.0 sec @ 92 mph
TOP SPEED: 130 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 155 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.90 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3992 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 24/22/29 mpg
C/D **OBSERVED:** 24 mpg

"The sublime ride of the E300 is coupled with a bewildering array of safety and auto driving stuff that will confuse drivers, including me."
—DANIEL PUND, DEPUTY EDITOR

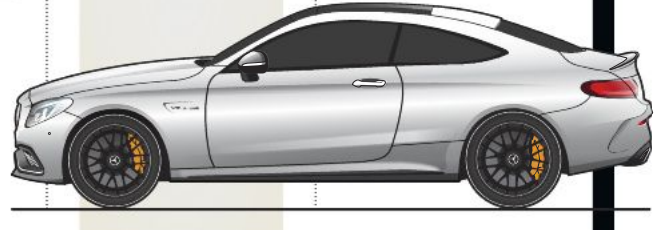
"The C63 is a performance car that just happens to be built in a C-class shell."
—MIKE DUFF, EUROPEAN EDITOR

2017 MERCEDES-AMG C63 S

MADE THE CUT BECAUSE: even the *Cosmopolitan* magazine editorial staff would have voted for this, the only 500-hp machine on hand.
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe
BASE PRICE: $75,925
ENGINE: twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 32-valve 4.0-liter V-8, 503 hp, 516 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 7-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 111.8 in
LENGTH: 187.0 in
WIDTH: 73.9 in
HEIGHT: 55.2 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 86 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 11 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH: 3.8 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 8.3 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.0 sec @ 121 mph
TOP SPEED: 180 mph (mfr's claim)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 151 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.98 g
CURB WEIGHT: 4102 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 19/17/23 mpg
C/D **OBSERVED:** 16 mpg



HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

WHY I LOVED THE AUDI A4 MORE THAN THE FORD FUSION SPORT. BY TONY QUIROGA

Quickness is relative. Step out of a Chevy Corvette Grand Sport, and most cars suddenly have lead-belted tires. It works the other way, too; a Hyundai Elantra can make just about any 10Best competitor seem as if it's burning nitromethane. That's important to remember at the event when choosing what to drive next.

Ford's new Fusion Sport never sat for long. Eager to see if Ford had recaptured the magic of the first-generation Taurus SHO, editor after editor hammered the 325-hp Fusion around the loop. I waited and waited.

With more power than every other mid-size family sedan, the Fusion Sport transcends the class in at least that respect. Also, it goes from a base price of $34,470 to an as-tested price of $41,665, which makes the Fusion Sport a tweener, inhabiting the space between family sedans and pricier sporting kit. Tired of waiting to drive the Ford, I grabbed the Audi A4's key.

On paper, the new A4 doesn't stand a chance against the Fusion Sport's superior power-to-weight ratio. But the 252-hp turbocharged 2.0-liter four works with a dual-clutch gearbox that provides unbroken power. Even after a Corvette aperitif, the A4's acceleration would be unexpectedly strong. A run to 60 takes 5.2 seconds with the quarter-mile delivered in 13.9 seconds at 100 mph. The A4 has a wide range of talents, too—one minute it's a refined luxury car, the next it's a sports sedan. That uncommonly wide bandwidth earned it a spot on my personal 10Best list.

My enthusiasm didn't persuade staffers who clutched their chests and fanned themselves with their ballots when faced with our test car's $54,275 price. Equipped with all-wheel drive, the A4 starts at $40,350. A well-optioned A4 is a $45,000 car, but Audi sent us a loaded A4 Quattro. Piling on extras until the price exceeds $50,000 deflates the A4's value proposition.

When I returned from the loop with the A4, I managed to catch the elusive Fusion Sport in a rare moment of repose. Even with a 252-hp act to follow, the Fusion Sport's acceleration didn't impress. In fact, it didn't seem any quicker than the A4.

Eager to get into the Fusion Sport, reviews editor Josh Jacquot opened the door as soon as I returned. The first words out of my mouth were: "It's not as quick as I thought it'd be. I don't think it's any quicker than that A4." Jacquot gave me the judgmental stare people usually deploy when they hear that someone enjoys listening to Nickelback.

The next day, Jacquot discovered that the instrumented data backed up what I felt. The A4 and the Fusion Sport posted identical zero-to-60-mph times; through the quarter, the Fusion could only pull ahead by a tenth of a second. Both have similar traction at launch; the primary difference is that the Audi's dual-clutch gearbox enables launch control and shifts faster than the Fusion's conventional automatic. It's also possible that Audi is understating the turbocharged 2.0-liter's power. Either way, the Fusion Sport did not turn out to be the Taurus SHO we thought it might be, and neither car got the votes to make the final list. About the only thing I'm still sure of is that my butt is properly calibrated.

5.2

SECONDS, ZERO TO 60 MPH —

"THE A4 IS A CRUSHINGLY COMPETENT SEDAN, ONE WHOSE ONLY VICE IS NOT BEING SPORTIER."

–Alex Stoklosa, online editor

photography by A.J. MUELLER

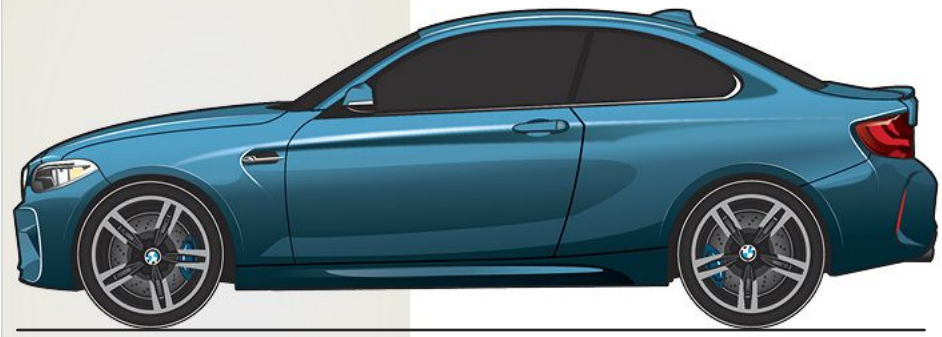
VS

THE INCUMBENTS

They're back! Because 10Best doesn't toss out the old for the sake of the new, we've sequestered last year's winners, keeping them fresh to face this year's challengers in Week Two. See here for how the returning cars' numbers stack up against their new or reborn competition's, and read on to the final section to see how we arrived at our list of winners.

2017 BMW M240i, M2

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear- or all-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe
BASE PRICE: $45,445–$52,695
ENGINES: turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve 3.0-liter inline-6, 335 hp, 369 lb-ft; turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve 3.0-liter inline-6, 365 hp, 369 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 7-speed dual-clutch automatic with manual shifting mode, 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 105.9–106.0 in
LENGTH: 175.9–176.2 in
WIDTH: 69.8–73.0 in
HEIGHT: 55.4–55.5 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 89 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 14 cu ft



"The M2's inline-six feels more powerful than the numbers on its spec sheet. It is so instantly quick that I avoided running over a squirrel by accelerating past him."
—EZRA DYER, CAROLINAS EDITOR

C/D TEST RESULTS

M240i (3.0-liter I-6, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.3 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 10.3 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.7 sec @ 111 mph
TOP SPEED: 155 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 155 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.94 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3570 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 25/21/32 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 23 mpg

M2 (3.0-liter I-6, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.2 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 10.0 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.7 sec @ 113 mph
TOP SPEED: 164 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 159 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.99 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3415 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 21/18/26 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 20 mpg

M2 (3.0-liter I-6, 7-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.0 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 9.6 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.5 sec @ 113 mph
TOP SPEED: 163 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 155 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.99 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3510 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 22/20/26 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 19 mpg

2017 CADILLAC CTS VSPORT

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $61,250
ENGINE: twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve 3.6-liter V-6, 420 hp, 430 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 114.6 in
LENGTH: 195.5 in • **WIDTH:** 72.2 in • **HEIGHT:** 57.2 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 97 cu ft • **TRUNK VOLUME:** 14 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

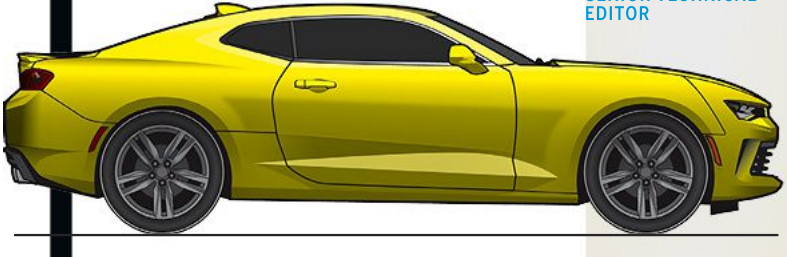
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.4 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 10.5 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.9 sec @ 111 mph
TOP SPEED: 171 mph (drag limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 149 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.97 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3966 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 18/16/24 mpg • ***C/D* OBSERVED:** 21 mpg

"She blinded me with Art & Science."
—JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR

2017 CHEVROLET CAMARO V-6/V-8

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe • **BASE PRICE:** $29,090–$37,900
ENGINES: DOHC 24-valve 3.6-liter V-6, 335 hp, 284 lb-ft; pushrod 16-valve 6.2-liter V-8, 455 hp, 455 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 110.7 in • **LENGTH:** 188.3 in **WIDTH:** 74.7 in • **HEIGHT:** 53.1 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 85 cu ft • **TRUNK VOLUME:** 9 cu ft

"The SS 1LE Camaro is almost as to-the-point as the old Z/28 was."
—K.C. COLWELL, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR



C/D TEST RESULTS

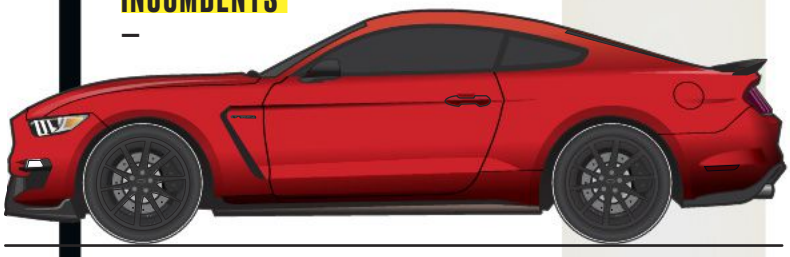
Camaro RS (3.6-liter V-6, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.2 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 12.5 sec
1/4-MILE: 13.8 sec @ 104 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 155 mph*
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 166 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.88 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3441 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 22/19/28 mpg • ***C/D* OBSERVED:** 22 mpg

Camaro SS (6.2-liter V-8, 8-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 3.9 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 8.9 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.3 sec @ 116 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 165 mph*
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 147 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.98 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3760 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 20/17/27 mpg • ***C/D* OBSERVED:** 18 mpg

Camaro SS 1LE (6.2-liter V-8, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.1 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 9.2 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.4 sec @ 116 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 165 mph*
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 141 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 1.05 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3747 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 19/16/25 mpg

**C/D* est.*

THE INCUMBENTS



2017 FORD MUSTANG SHELBY GT350/GT350R

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2- or 4-passenger, 2-door coupe • **BASE PRICE:** $56,770
ENGINE: DOHC 32-valve 5.2-liter V-8, 526 hp, 429 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION: 6-speed manual
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 107.1 in • **LENGTH:** 188.9–189.7 in
WIDTH: 75.9 in • **HEIGHT:** 53.6–54.2 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 55–85 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 14 cu ft

C/D TEST RESULTS

GT350 (5.2-liter V-8, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 4.3 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 9.1 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.5 sec @ 117 mph
TOP SPEED: 175 mph (*C/D* est)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 152 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.98 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3796 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 16/14/21 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 15 mpg

GT350R (5.2-liter V-8, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 3.9 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 8.6 sec
1/4-MILE: 12.2 sec @ 119 mph
TOP SPEED: 175 mph (*C/D* est)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 146 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 1.10 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3710 lb
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 16/14/21 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 14 mpg

"Driving the Shelby GT350 is a visceral experience that stays with you long after you switch off its ignition."
—MIKE SUTTON, SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR

2017 MAZDA 3

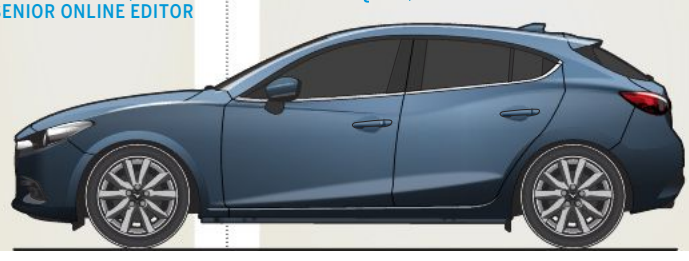
VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan or hatchback
BASE PRICE: $18,680–$23,980
ENGINES: DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter Atkinson-capable inline-4, 155 hp, 150 lb-ft; DOHC 16-valve 2.5-liter Atkinson-capable inline-4, 184 hp, 185 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 6-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS **WHEELBASE:** 106.3 in • **LENGTH:** 175.6–180.3 in • **WIDTH:** 70.7 in • **HEIGHT:** 57.3 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 96 cu ft
CARGO/TRUNK VOLUME: 12–20 cu ft

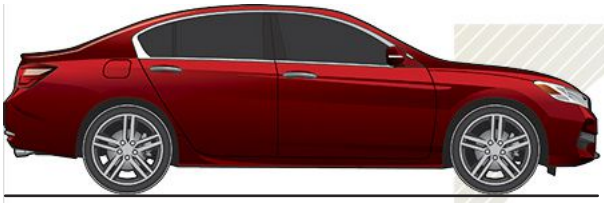
C/D TEST RESULTS

3 Touring sedan (2.0-liter I-4, 6-sp auto)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 8.0 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 22.3 sec
1/4-MILE: 16.2 sec @ 88 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 132 mph (governor limited) • **BRAKING, 70–0 MPH:** 179 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.82 g
CURB WEIGHT: 2935 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 32/28/37 mpg • ***C/D* OBSERVED:** 33 mpg

3 Grand Touring hatchback (2.5-liter I-4, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 7.3 sec • **ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 19.0 sec
1/4-MILE: 15.6 sec @ 91 mph • **TOP SPEED:** 131 mph (governor limited) • **BRAKING, 70–0 MPH:** 182 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.84 g
CURB WEIGHT: 3003 lb
FUEL ECONOMY **EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 28/25/33 mpg • ***C/D* OBSERVED:** 29 mpg

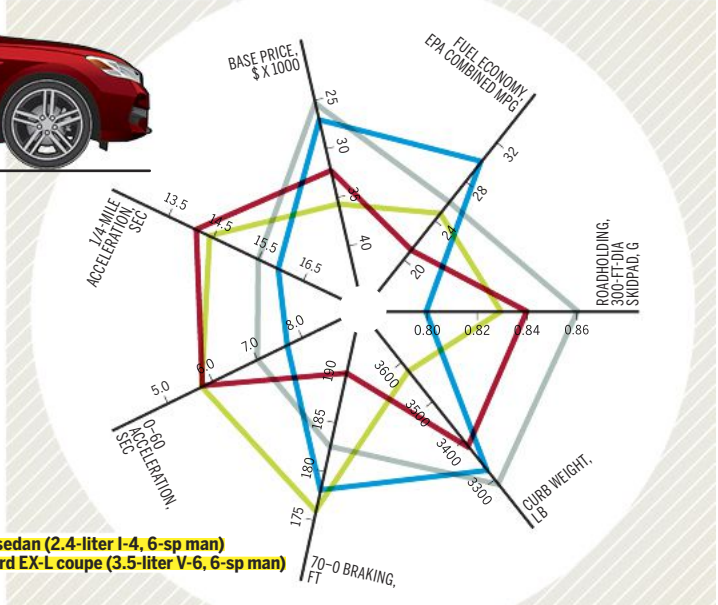
"The best alternative to boring for similar money."
—JOSH JACQUOT, REVIEWS EDITOR





2017 HONDA ACCORD

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 2-door coupe or 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE: $23,190–$32,010
ENGINES: DOHC 16-valve 2.4-liter inline-4, 185 or 189 hp, 181 or 182 lb-ft; SOHC 24-valve 3.5-liter V-6, 278 hp, 251 or 252 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 6-speed automatic with manual shifting mode, continuously variable automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 107.3–109.3 in • **LENGTH:** 189.5–192.5 in
WIDTH: 72.8–73.0 in • **HEIGHT:** 56.5–57.7 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 93–103 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME: 13–16 cu ft



Accord EX sedan (2.4-liter I-4, CVT) • **Accord Sport sedan (2.4-liter I-4, 6-sp man)**
Accord Touring sedan (3.5-liter V-6, 6-sp auto) • **Accord EX-L coupe (3.5-liter V-6, 6-sp man)**

FEAR OF FASHION

AUDI'S TTS IS A GREAT DESIGN. I'M OKAY WITH THAT.

BY DAVID GRANGER

Make no mistake: I was deeply honored to be invited to take part in the deliberations toward selecting the 2017 10Best. I spent five days driving 40-some contenders and most of the incumbents . . . fantastic. But there were moments when I couldn't help but feel as though I had been plopped down in Dr. Alterman's Camp for Mildly Wayward Boys. I mean, the entire two-week drive-athon is staged at a freaking Boy Scout camp, and there are, like, 42 dudes (plus one brave woman) in their scruffy facial hair (the dudes) and vintage *Car and Driver* tees worn under untucked flannel shirts. Nearly every conversation deals with the minutiae of a highly specialized sub-sector of American culture, and it seemed as though we had all been magically transported to some kind of Neverland (the original one; not Michael Jackson's) where no one has to grow up, where the cars are always brand-new, and where the Washtenaw Dairy doughnuts are always fresh and warm.

In this environment, after let's-call-it-two-decades as editor-in-chief of *Esquire,* it should have been no surprise that the car by which I was most surprised to be delighted, the car that I spent the most time in, was one that gets no love from this crowd: the Audi TTS.

To be fair, the TT has always seemed, even to me, a bit unmanly. Its original iteration was too cute. A little underpowered. Kinda small. And those traits kept me away for a long time. But nearly 20 years since its debut, the new TT is a badass. The moment all four wheels hit the pavement, I was shocked by its acceleration and then maybe more impressed by how much the car had left in it at the point when I was starting to get scared. But I'm no car reviewer. All I know is that my best drive of the week was chasing the hallowed 718 Boxster in the screaming-yellow TTS and the Porsche never got away from me.

The reason the TT gets no official love is because, well, fashion. The mass of American men lead lives of instinctively recoiling from conspicuous displays of design, especially design that calls attention to itself. It's pretentious. It's ostentatious. Even though we live in a century in which design has become necessary to teach us how to make use of the technological advances of the past 20 years, we are still suspicious of products that call attention to how well designed they are. Even though we've endured 15 years of cable TV (from *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* to freaking Ryan Seacrest asking men what they're wearing on the red carpet) teaching us that it's okay to wear slim-fit trousers and a fitted suit jacket, here we still are, in untucked dress shirts and comfortable Levi's.

I admit that the TT makes a point of calling attention to itself. Before I drove it, I found its paint job to be a little, um, alienating. And my first impression, upon falling into its driver's seat, is that it's awfully luxurious, a trait that I'm sure interferes with some drivers' sense that they are one with the road. And maybe its interior is just a little too clever (though not in the annoying way, say, a Mini's interior can be). But that was the first thing that thrilled me about the car. It took me a minute to figure out how to get the air conditioning going because the controls are integrated into the three round air vents in the dash. I'd never seen such a thing, and after another 15 seconds, it began to seem like a deficit in every other car I'd ever driven.

I've always been a little suspicious of Audis, worrying that they were more flash than substance. But I'm a TT man now. Think of me what you will.

33

UNFASHIONABLE DUDES, ACTUALLY

—

"THE AUDI TTS MAY BE THE ULTIMATE CAR TO BE BUILT OFF VW'S MQB PLATFORM, BUT IT STILL SEEMS LESS TARGETED AT FUN-TO-DRIVE THAN DRIVE-TO-IMPRESS."

–Jeff Sabatini, features editor

photograph by A.J. MUELLER

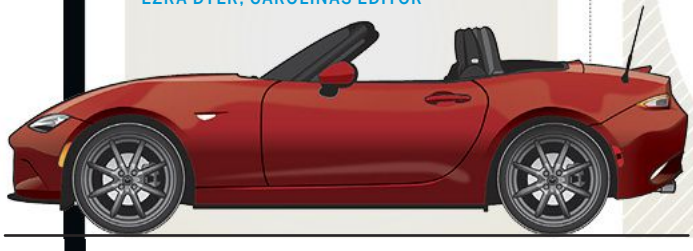
2017 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA/RF

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door convertible or targa
BASE PRICE: $26,000–$32,390 (est)
ENGINE: DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4, 155 hp, 148 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 6-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS WHEELBASE: 90.9 in • **LENGTH:** 154.1 in **WIDTH:** 68.3 in • **HEIGHT:** 48.6–49.0 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 48–49 cu ft • **TRUNK VOLUME:** 4–5 cu ft

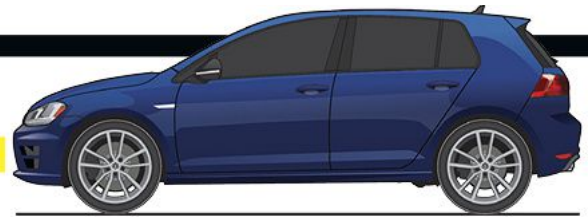
C/D TEST RESULTS

MX-5 Miata (2.0-liter I-4, 6-sp auto)	MX-5 Miata (2.0-liter I-4, 6-sp man)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 6.4 sec	**ZERO TO 60 MPH:** 5.8 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 18.1 sec	**ZERO TO 100 MPH:** 17.3 sec
1/4-MILE: 15.1 sec @ 93 mph	**1/4-MILE:** 14.6 sec @ 94 mph
TOP SPEED: 130 mph (*C/D* est)	**TOP SPEED:** 129 mph (drag limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 156 ft	**BRAKING, 70–0 MPH:** 161 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.90 g	**ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD:** 0.88 g
CURB WEIGHT: 2383 lb	**CURB WEIGHT:** 2324 lb
FUEL ECONOMY EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 29/26/35 mpg	**FUEL ECONOMY EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY:** 29/26/33 mpg
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 28 mpg	***C/D* OBSERVED:** 25 mpg

"The RF is the Miata I'd want to take on a thousand-mile drive."
—EZRA DYER, CAROLINAS EDITOR



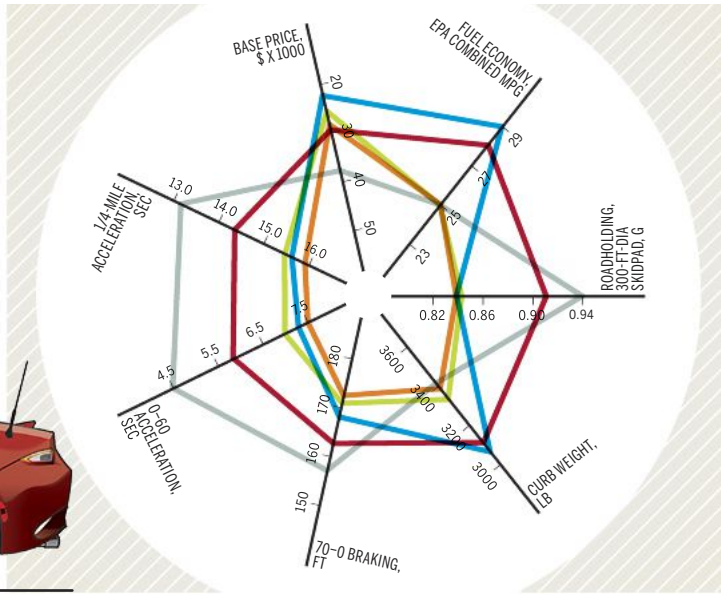
THE INCUMBENTS

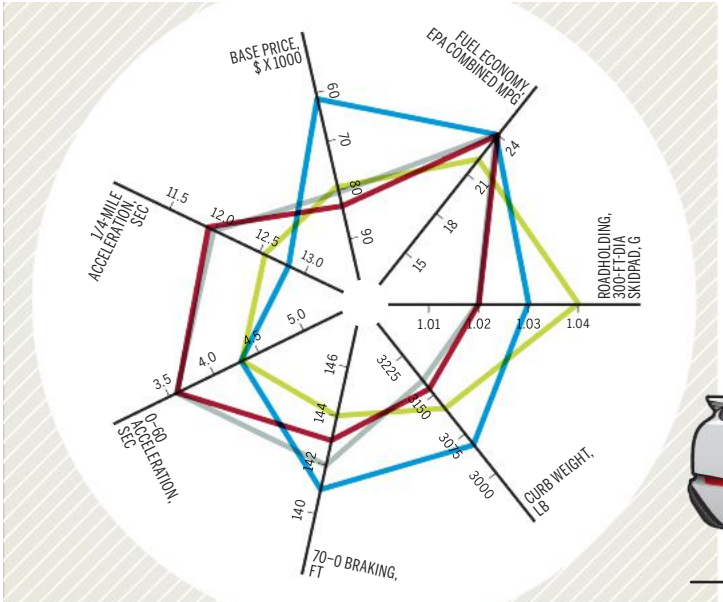


2017 VOLKSWAGEN GOLF, GOLF SPORTWAGEN, GOLF ALLTRACK, GTI, GOLF R

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front- or all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door hatchback
BASE PRICE: $20,715–$36,475 • **ENGINES:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 1.8-liter inline-4, 170 hp, 184 or 199 lb-ft; turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4, 210, 220, or 292 hp, 258 or 280 lb-ft • **TRANSMISSIONS:** 6-speed manual, 6-speed dual-clutch automatic with manual shifting mode, 6-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS WHEELBASE: 103.5–103.8 in • **LENGTH:** 167.5–180.2 in • **WIDTH:** 70.8 in **HEIGHT:** 56.5–59.7 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 93–94 cu ft • **CARGO VOLUME:** 23–30 cu ft

Volkswagen Golf (1.8-liter I-4, 6-sp auto) • **Volkswagen Golf Alltrack (1.8-liter I-4, 6-sp auto)**
Volkswagen Golf SportWagen 4MOTION (1.8-liter I-4, 6-sp auto)
Volkswagen Golf R (2.0-liter I-4, 6-sp auto) • **Volkswagen GTI (2.0-liter I-4, 6-sp man)**

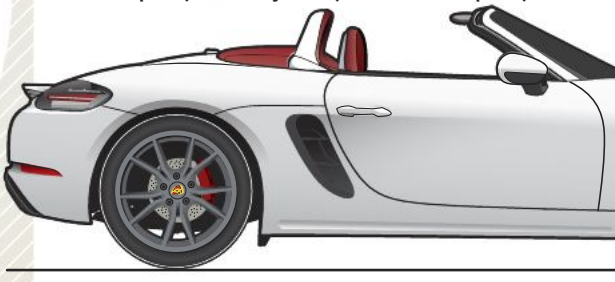




2017 PORSCHE 718

VEHICLE TYPE: mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door coupe or convertible • **BASE PRICE:** $54,950–$69,450
ENGINES: turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter flat-4, 300 hp, 280 lb-ft; turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.5-liter flat-4, 350 hp, 309 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 7-speed dual-clutch automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS WHEELBASE: 97.4 in • **LENGTH:** 172.4 in **WIDTH:** 70.9 in • **HEIGHT:** 50.4–51.0 in • **PASSENGER VOLUME:** 49 cu ft • **CARGO VOLUME:** 9–15 cu ft

718 Boxster S (2.5-liter flat-4, 6-sp man) • **718 Boxster S (2.5-liter flat-4, 7-sp auto)** • **718 Cayman (2.0-liter flat-4, 6-sp man)** • **718 Cayman S (2.5-liter flat-4, 7-sp auto)**



DID NOT START

2017 TESLA MODEL S

VEHICLE TYPE: rear- or front-and-rear-motor, rear- or all-wheel-drive, 5- or 7-passenger, 4- or 5-door hatchback
BASE PRICE: $67,200–$75,700
MOTORS: AC induction, 302 hp, 325 lb-ft (RWD); 2 AC induction, combined system, 328 hp, 387 lb-ft (AWD)
BATTERY: liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 60 or 75 kWh
TRANSMISSION: 1-speed direct drive

DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE: 116.5 in
LENGTH: 196.0 in
WIDTH: 77.3 in
HEIGHT: 56.5 in
PASSENGER VOLUME: 95 cu ft
CARGO VOLUME: 5/26 cu ft (front/rear)

C/D TEST RESULTS

Model S 60 (AC motor, 1-sp direct drive)
ZERO TO 60 MPH: 5.5 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH: 15.0 sec
1/4-MILE: 14.2 sec @ 98 mph
TOP SPEED: 121 mph (governor limited)
BRAKING, 70–0 MPH: 174 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD: 0.89 g
CURB WEIGHT: 4323 lb

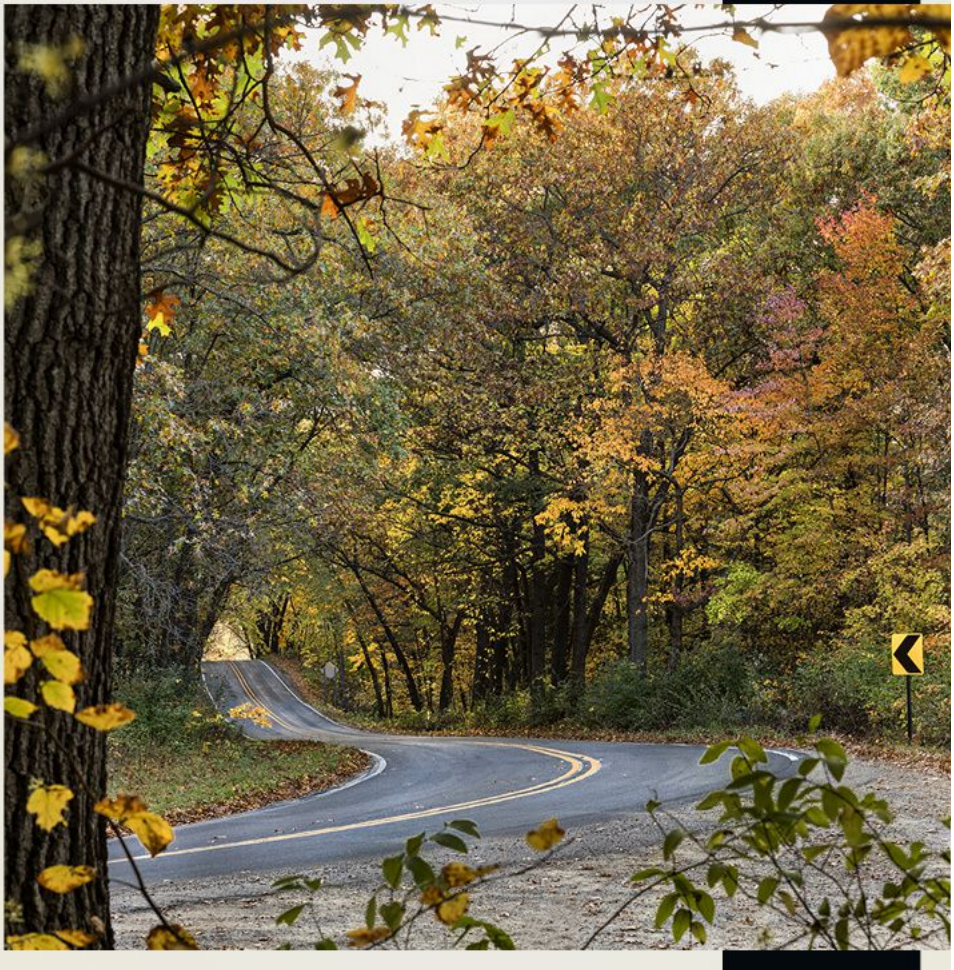
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA COMBINED/CITY/HWY: 99/98/101 MPGe
***C/D* OBSERVED:** 120 MPGe

"The Boxster gives me confidence I didn't know I had."
—JOSEPH CAPPARELLA, ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR

We emailed. We called. We called and emailed again. By the time we actually got someone from Tesla on the phone, we were suffering from a new kind of range anxiety, as 10Best testing was looming uncomfortably near. And then Tesla said it did not have a Model S for us. Which is funny because we already have one here at Eisenhower Place. But our long-term Model S is a P85D, which is not only out of production but also exceeds our $80,000 price cap by a good $25,000. We needed one of the current entry-level cars, a 60 or 60D. Even a 75, which is essentially a 60 with a software upgrade to unlock more of its battery pack's capacity, would have worked. Sorry, said Tesla, no such car is available. Sorry, we said, but rules are rules. So, after two consecutive 10Best appearances, the Tesla Model S is out.

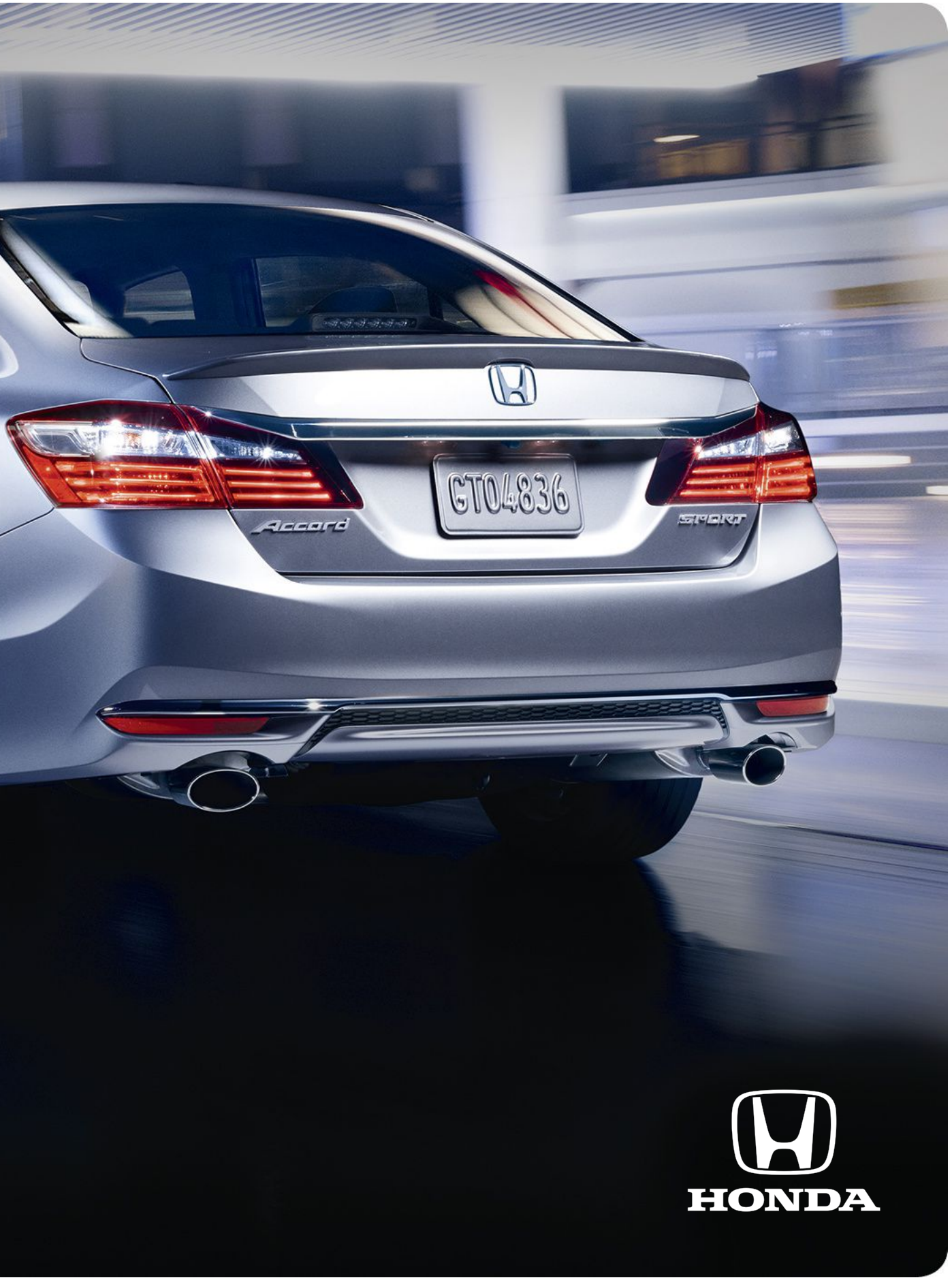
2
10BEST APPEARANCES

"TESLA BACKING OUT OF 10BEST IS LIKE BARRY SANDERS WALKING AWAY FROM THE DETROIT LIONS IN 1999. OR MAYBE THAT'S NOT THE BEST ANALOGY. WE DON'T WANT TO BE THE LIONS."
–Jeff Sabatini, features editor



photograph by JUSTIN MACONOCHIE

Accord
10Best
CAR AND DRIVER
2017
31 wins is unprecedented.
Of course, 30 was unprecedented last year.
The Accord once again broke the record
for the most *Car and Driver* 10Best awards.



Accord Sport Sedan shown. *Car and Driver*, January 2017. ©2017 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

MANO

The Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport meets the Ford Mustang Shelby GT350 and everyone's the better for it.

_by Tony Quiroga

_photography by Marc Urbano

A MANO

IN EARLY 2009, WHEN GM AND FORD WERE STUMBLING TOWARD UNCERTAINTY AND THE DETROIT AUTO SHOW HAD ALL THE GLITZ OF AN INSURANCE CONVENTION, NO ONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT THE MOTOR CITY

would ever again produce cars like the GT350 and the Grand Sport. But it's well known that car companies can be at their best when they're anxious about keeping the lights on. Both of these cars came from a hunger to prove that world-class virtue can be more than marketing talking points. And so, eight years after the doom and gloom, we have these two unimaginably good V-8 machines and a $64,000 question.

Believing that there'd only be space for one of these cars on the list, our staff was divided, with the GT350's backers on one side and the Grand Sport's on the other. In the final summation, each car had the votes to clinch its spot, but the rift helped us arrive at a deeper understanding of both.

Last year, the Corvette missed the 10Best cut after the C7's two-year run. Perhaps the intoxicating influence of the 650-hp Z06 would have helped the Corvette gain enough votes for another year, yet by then GM had raised the price above our $80,000 cap. Enter the Grand Sport, which mates the regular Corvette powertrain to the chassis of the mighty Z06 while avoiding a major price increase. You can park a GS in your driveway for as little as $66,445, exactly $10,000 more than the base car and nearly $15,000 less than the Z06.

To keep the price semi-attainable, the Grand Sport uses the Corvette's naturally aspirated small-block V-8. A dry-sump 6.2-liter unit with 460 horsepower, this pushrod engine spins to its 6600-rpm rev limiter with ferocity. It has gobs of power. Every stomp on the accelerator requires you to take in a lungful of air to counteract the shove of the V-8's fierce torque and instant response. Celebrate it. Hear it transform organic molecules into motion, warmth, and smooth purrs. It's a welcome reprieve from a world turning to narcoleptic turbo fours that refuse to redline.

No one wrote a single paean to the Z06's absent supercharger because no one missed it. It's telling that no staffer suggested that the Grand Sport could use more horsepower. With a seven-speed manual, 60 mph is only 3.9 seconds away and the quarter comes up in 12.3 seconds at 117 mph. A pull through the first two gears is all that's necessary to understand how and why Chevrolet has built more than 10 million small-blocks. Effortless power is as persuasive today as it was in 1955.

Ford's take on the modern V-8 has four cams and 32 valves, and it revs to an implausible 8250 rpm. This engine completely transforms the Mustang. And while no one will mistake the GT350's V-8 for crooner Michael Bublé, we have to acknowledge that it's coarse by design. Testing director Don Sherman called it "two 2.6-liter four-cylinder engines with no balance shafts but a common crankshaft." The car's most vocal detractor continued: "Hanging six tuned mass dampers under the car is not effective at turning this 8250-rpm Voodoo into a smooth, sweet V-8."

We all heard it: The GT350 busts through

MICHIGAN
044M597

"It's not just its insane performance for the price, but that a Corvette is obtainable–you can just walk into a dealership and buy one. Try doing that with a supercar."

—DAVID BEARD, ASSISTANT TECHNICAL EDITOR

"I have no business driving this on the street, but neither does anyone else."

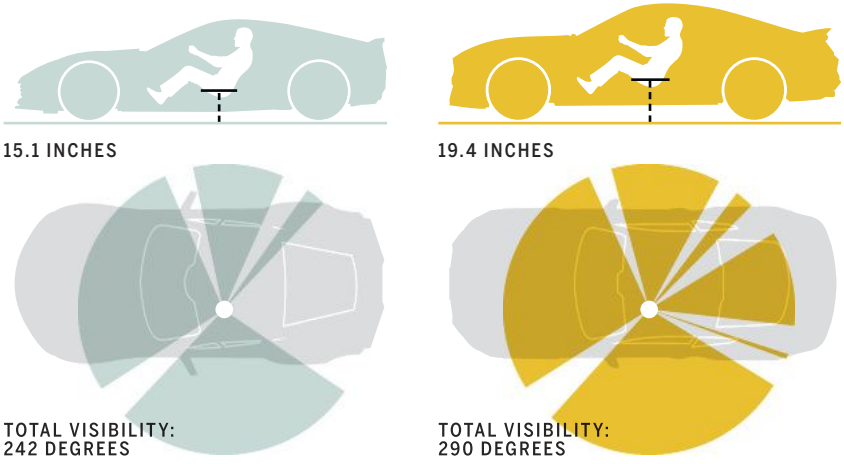
—JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR

its first two gears quickly enough that the raspy moans it makes at low revs are fleeting spine tinglers. Running to 60 mph takes only 4.3 seconds. But rev it out in higher gears, and the engine sounds as if it's munching on itself, ready to rocket some pistons through the hood. None of that comes through the exhaust, however. From outside, the GT350 sounds the way a Jackson Pollock painting looks. It's a splattering of sound—fiery, shocking, angry, and somehow perfect.

Below 4000 rpm, the GT350 lacks the Corvette's deep well of torque. Swing the needle past 8000 rpm and tap the 526 horsepower, though, and it's hard not to think that maybe that Chevy V-8 belongs in a pickup. Double the GT350's $56,770 price, and there's still nothing as exotic as this Romeo, Michigan–built engine.

Painted red with big white stripes running down the center, the Grand Sport and the GT350 might as well be draped in Old Glory. Both models differ from their lesser kin with broader fenders that cover up wider tires. Neither car has many surprises inside. We're accustomed to both, from the Corvette's smell of polyester resin to the Mustang's huge touchscreen and toggle switches. Ford uses standard Recaros that fit as if they're custom-made. Chevy asks $1995 for its Competition Sport seats, but we prefer the standard chairs.

▼ H-POINT HEIGHT AND OUTWARD VISIBILITY



While some seats may be optional on the Grand Sport, the serious hardware—magnetorheological dampers, an electronically controlled differential, and the Z06's larger brakes—comes standard. For the rare occasions when Michelin Pilot Super Sports aren't enough, the track-ready Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires and carbon-ceramic brakes of the Z07 package will knock your cochlea into the creek. Even without the Z07 package, stops from 70 mph take 136 feet, and grip on the skidpad is an unbelievable 1.13 g's. These are supercar numbers that move into the hypercar realm when the Vette is equipped with the Z07's exotic rubber and brakes. In the real world, it's nigh on impossible to regularly tap the Grand Sport's potential.

A GT350R is a 1.10-g car, but the plain GT350 that Ford sent us this year has less cling, just 0.98 g. But this "low-grip" GT350 has more than enough stick to eviscerate our 13.5-mile loop. Its handling limits are approachable and usable. Perhaps you've seen videos of Mustangs leaving car shows with disastrous results. Chalk it up to lack of skill. If you know what you're doing, there's simply no treachery to this chassis (or that of any new Mustang); it does what you expect of it safely, predictably, and obediently.

Part of the appeal of the 10Best loop is that it's as unsettling as stepping on a Hot Wheels in the dark. In short order, the lumpy and bumpy asphalt exposes chassis-tuning compromises. To get a Mustang to 0.98 g, Ford fits stiff springs and adjustable dampers and steamroller-wide rubber. The resulting ride is impossible to ignore in this setting. Deputy editor Daniel Pund, who placed the GT350 just outside his 10Best list, said: "I may have been more willing to accept the GT350's overly stiff ride when it was the hot new thing last year. But I can't ignore that it was actively trying to throw me off the road."

Even with a 1.13-g chassis, the Corvette's magnetorheological dampers and spring rates offer more compliance and a slightly calmer experience. It's gifted—possibly too gifted—with grip and composure that can make it seem aloof. Throwing this supercar down a narrow byway like our 10Best loop requires a frustrating amount of restraint. The solution is to go faster, but what this car really needs is a track. It's the complete opposite of a narrow-tire car like the Mazda MX-5 Miata, which slips and grips and remains engaging even at lower speeds. "Too much for the road," became a common refrain as editor after editor stepped out of the Corvette. Life beyond 1.10 g's is both a blessing and a curse.

For some staffers, the Grand Sport was on the bubble. Deputy online editor Dave VanderWerp called it "a little too extreme and track-oriented for something that is probably mostly used for Sunday morning, back-road drives. Megacapable, yes—see its Lightning Lap performance—but it just didn't flow down the 10Best roads like some of the more fun cars, including the Miata, or, frankly, the Shelby GT350."

However, senior editor Jared Gall had the opposite take: "The only reason not to put it on the list is that it is too fast and too capable to exploit on public roads. To leave it off the list would be to punish Chevrolet for making it too good." Enough staffers agreed with Gall's logic for the Grand Sport to secure its position on the list because, although its performance borders on being unusable, criticizing it for being a supercar means ignoring the fact that it's the greatest performance deal available today.

The GT350 also found its spot on our 10Best roster because it is a transcendent machine that looks like a Mustang. Senior technical editor and GT350 advocate K.C. Colwell summed it up: "There are arguments for both, but the GT350 is by far the most complete car. I drove the Grand Sport and the GT350 back to back twice to come to that conclusion. The Ford is more desirable, more practical, and cheaper." It's okay with enough of us that the engine isn't "easy listening." You don't want a car like that to make the equivalent of elevator music anyway. As unnecessary as it is wonderful, this engine transforms the Mustang into something esoteric.

If all this means that we have two V-8 cars with similar missions and pricing, so be it. We're living in halcyon days for performance cars, and our votes reflect that. After all, the big V-8 deserves its own place next to jazz and the television sitcom as a uniquely American art form.

◄ *photography by* TOM SALT ▲ *illustrations by* PETE SUCHESKI

The Smart Appliance

Why the pedestrian Honda Accord out-achieves the new Mercedes-Benz E-class.

_by Eddie Alterman

"The Mercedes E300 is an exceptional car in need of a more powerful engine."

—ERIK JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE ONLINE EDITOR

HONDA ACCORD SPORT 6-SP MAN: 35

HONDA ACCORD TOURING V-6: 35

MERCEDES-BENZ E300 4MATIC: 32

"It speaks volumes about the Accord's tuning that, with a single drive mode, it can be both a well-mannered, quiet, roomy car and a quick-witted, fun sporting machine."

—ALEX STOKLOSA, ONLINE EDITOR

The Honda Accord and the Mercedes-Benz E-class carry a lot of literal and figurative baggage, most of it good, some of it bad. Those allegorical Samsonites (or Tumis, in the Benz's case) obscure that these cars are more similar than their differences in price, image, and execution would suggest. Yes, the Honda has long been the unassuming, unpretentious, and unquestioned definition of the modern family car, whereas the Benz mid-sizer has been filling country-club parking lots for more than half a century. But both are long-running, highly evolved models of protean versatility. And their confrontation at this year's 10Best illuminates that, though their paths have been different from the start, they have converged on the same fixation: total driver satisfaction.

The Accord is a kitchen appliance, engineered to offer an ambitiously broad set of buyers a car that makes them feel smart and secure. It is quiet and roomy, safe and efficient, inexpensive yet well equipped. It is a rational choice in a sea of rational choices. What sets it apart, as we've noted in 30 past 10Bests, is the way it drives. This is the front-wheel-drive sports sedan that nobody seems able to consistently recreate, a car that flows from corner to corner with predictability and gratification, its engine loaded for exit, its preferred manual transmission slid tightly into gear. There is a controllability and a precision to the Accord that unburden its driver from thinking too hard about going fast. Or from really worrying about much of anything.

The E-class strives to rid its driver of worry, too. It does so with its brand and the heritage accrued to it, but also with a trick bag of semi-autonomous features. Its new Drive Pilot cruise control can lock on to cars ahead at speeds up to 130 mph, providing a convenient excuse for inevitable run-ins with the law. "I swear, officer—I was just keeping up with traffic!" The E-class also offers Active Brake Assist with Cross-Traffic Function, which stops the car from barreling into intersections while its driver is texting. The car will steer evasively for you; park itself in a garage (a feature coming to the U.S. in a later model year); and communicate with its surroundings, the first production instance of what Mercedes-Benz calls a "fully integral Car-to-X solution." Really makes you want to get behind the wheel, eh?

For those determined to drive themselves, there are delights galore. The new E-class is nothing if not obedient. It moves locomotive-like down an interstate, requiring no constant and annoying corrections at the wheel. And with a little steering lock and cornering loads in the tires, its metabolism rises as you gallop over a twisting road, deftly transitioning from curve to curve, the car doing the work.

Moreover, the new E-class's interior is no longer the dour funeral director's office of past Benzes. As in the S-class, it offers rolling-spa treatments in the form of massaging seats and perfumed interior air. The cabin is a tightly edited yet sumptuous place, with a full-glass-cockpit option, a Burmester audio package, tasteful wood inlays, and seats that, even in base form, make you want to lean back and order something from the galley. And yet: The Accord has more legroom in the rear.

We were somewhat disappointed by the E-class's base steel-sprung suspension, in that it transmits too many high-frequency jolts through the wheels to the structure. The base car never really floats over the road the way old Benzes or, for that matter, new Accords do. For that, you need to pop for the air suspension, which costs $1900 and is worth every penny. The air ride is spectacular; it feels as if it's lowering your heart rate.

So, unfortunately, does the engine. The Mercedes' 2.0-liter turbo four strains valiantly and mostly silently to motivate the car. But despite its nine-speed gearbox shuffling for aces, the engine cannot match the lunging spirit of the Honda's naturally aspirated four, regardless of the latter's 50-plus-horsepower deficit. And the Accord's V-6 positively shames the Benz and will until such time as the AMG E43 and E63 versions arrive.

Mercedes, God bless it, strives to stay at the bleeding edge of technological innovation, now increasingly defined as software development. But software is cheap, and it's unfortunate for luxury carmakers that this technology has trickled down so much more quickly than hardware ever could. For while Honda's safety suite, called Honda Sensing, can't claim the technological leadership of the Benz's semi-autonomy, it's a pretty damn good net, one well suited to determined drivers who only occasionally admit to checking their phones.

The 10Best competition throws odd pairings together but always in the service of the same question: Is this the least expensive version of the best possible car? When it comes to the Accord, that answer is yes. The appliance is the driver's car and the luxury good is the somewhat distant, automated one. How about that.

◄ C/D OBSERVED HIGHWAY FUEL ECONOMY, MPG

◄ *photograph by* MARC URBANO ▲ *photograph by* TOM SALT

CHARGE!

Chevrolet Bolt in the land of the alt-fuelers. _*by Mike Duff*

DESPITE THE FEVERED ARGUMENTS OF CONSPIRACY THEORISTS AND THE SORT OF PEOPLE WE CAN ONLY REFER TO AS DROOLING WACKOS,

General Motors' infamous decision to kill its first electric car was entirely rational. The EV1 proved comprehensively that in the mid-1990s, an era when gas frequently dropped below a buck a gallon, the world was not ready for combustion-free mobility.

Twenty years on, gas is still relatively cheap and we've still not reached the ion-fueled future the Jetsons promised, but we're getting closer. The Chevrolet Bolt touches down in a different world, one that is edging toward the point where EVs start to make sense to people other than the sort of folk who campaign against cruelty to fruit. The Bolt isn't an excuse-free electric car, but it earns its place on the 10Best list by being the one that comes closest to rebutting two of the biggest criticisms that have been levied against the genre: expense and range.

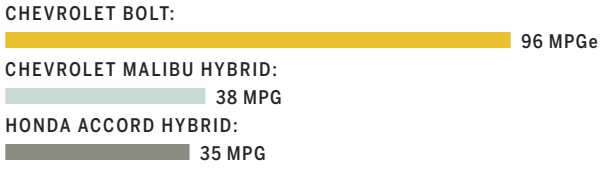
The Bolt was also the only EV in this year's test. We would love to tell you how it compared with the pricier and glitzier Tesla Model S, but despite our repeated requests, Tesla refused to supply us with a car and thereby failed to defend its 10Best berth. We've since changed our cologne and started to chew mints.

The Bolt is inexpensive but still a pricier proposition than conventional internal-combustion rivals, arriving at its $29,995 price tag only after the $7500 federal EV tax credit gets factored in.

"The Bolt is GM's iPhone. It's not perfect, but it is a significant and sly agent of change."
—MIKE SUTTON, SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR

◄ *photograph by* TOM SALT

C/D-OBSERVED FUEL ECONOMY



So although it's still a ways off a conventional Volkswagen Golf or Chevy Cruze on a cost-benefit analysis, it has redefined its own part of the market. It offers more than twice the range of even the bigger-batteried versions of the Nissan Leaf and BMW i3. If GM had produced a Corvette that could go twice as fast as a GT-R or a Porsche 911, you'd be impressed, right?

The Bolt delivers, too. We'd already beaten its 238-mile EPA rating on a coastal California drive in a prototype before this production-spec Bolt came to play, but its arrival at our campsite still triggered an unseemly scramble from our judges. We were drawn to its novelty, but many of us were also motivated by the experience of EVs in previous years that started to run short of charge long before we started debating what to have for lunch. Would the Bolt fizzle out, too? Despite a week of scientifically applied abuse, dozens of laps of the test loop, and several trips farther afield, the Bolt never ran short of juice, needing only to be recharged each night. You can pretty much whale on it and still expect 180 miles from the e-tank, although faster cruising does gobble charge. (Yes, we did confirm the presence of a 93-mph speed limiter.)

The driving experience is painless, in much the same way local anesthesia is. And though the Bolt is no Aventador, it is amusingly different than a conventional car. All of the EV hallmarks are here: effortless off-the-line acceleration, a monorail soundtrack, and the running-into-molasses sensation of regenerative braking when you lift off the right pedal (provided the Bolt is in its maxi-harvesting "low" drive mode). It's certainly quick at 6.5 seconds to 60 mph. That's not Tesla-fast, but it is more than enough poke to make the Nissan Leaf feel like a glorified golf cart. With the Bolt's arrival, the Leaf pretty much is.

Conventional wisdom says that hybrid sedans are the no-compromise green choices. An affordable EV with a 238-mile range tests that notion vigorously.

The Bolt battery pack's 60-kWh capacity means it's big, constituting 960 pounds of the Bolt's overall 3569-pound curb weight. That makes the car heavier than both the Leaf and the carbon-bodied i3, but about 750 pounds lighter than the elephantine Tesla Model S 60. The Bolt doesn't feel so portly in everyday use, riding well and handling with tidy if disinterested precision.

And it is refined: Once the motor whine fades, the cabin is almost silent. But there's no appetite for faster progress; the Chevy's eco tires struggle to find traction to match enthusiastic deployment of the motor's 266 pound-feet of peak torque. The lateral-grip limits are similarly modest, with excess speed in slower corners causing the Bolt to understeer like a puppy on a freshly waxed floor. We're already lobbying for an SS version rolling on Michelin Pilot Super Sports.

The Bolt's purity of purpose came into focus when the car was pitted against the two hybrids that visited 10Best this year: versions of the Chevrolet Malibu and Honda Accord sedans. Both of these part-electrics made the first cut, but they're fence sitters that haven't gained much of anything from hybridization beyond fractional increases in real-world fuel economy. The Accord feels slightly heavier and less wieldy than its sweet-handling four-cylinder sister and suffers from a hybrid arrangement that makes its engine sound like a food blender when asked to deliver acceleration. The Malibu hybrid turns effortless into bland, its unexceptional competence confirming that GM's engineering A-team was focused on the pure-electric side of the fence. We're increasingly convinced that electrification needs its own wheels, its own dedicated platform, rather than continuing to borrow the keys to dad's sedan.

Design is where our opinions on the Bolt divided. The Korean-penned styling had both fans and haters, but the most-asked question was why GM chose to launch its brave new electric architecture in the guise of a geeky hatchback rather than one of those crossovers people are lining up to buy. The cabin is practical and spacious enough, although we found the roofline too low in back. The interior materials feel tough and durable but not upmarket. Inside, it feels closer to $20,000 than $30,000, but it's easy to do the math on that one. GM has disclosed that it's paying LG $145 per kWh for battery cells, meaning the 60-kWh lump is responsible for $8700 of the car's cost. And that's before you consider the price of the motor, the transaxle, the wiring, and the cooling system.

The Bolt is a car that inspires respect rather than poetry. Its presence here is justified on the strength of its engineering rather than its looks or performance numbers. It advances the EV game further than anything since the launch of the Model S. Like every pure-electric vehicle, it requires compromise—you could fly from L.A. to Europe in less time than it takes to replenish the battery pack from empty using a household 110-volt socket. Yet the Bolt is irrefutably a landmark car, as sensible as you'd expect an electron-powered Chevrolet to be, and welcome proof that established automakers can indeed make class-leading electric vehicles.

"The Malibu is the best hybrid sedan, but it's still a hybrid sedan."
—JOSH JACQUOT, REVIEWS EDITOR
"Why is the Accord hybrid mooing?"
—EDDIE ALTERMAN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

▲ *photograph by* MARC URBANO

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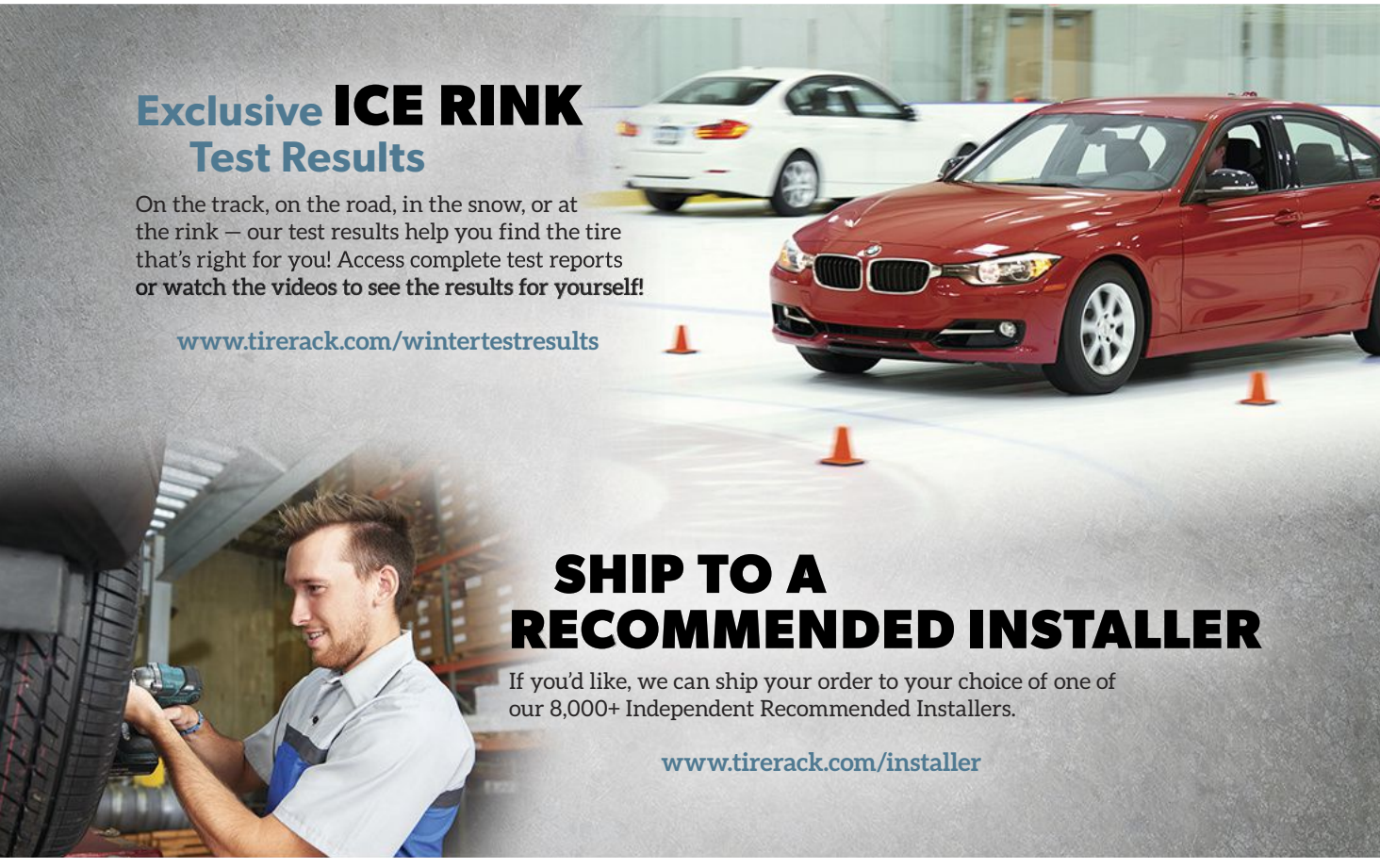

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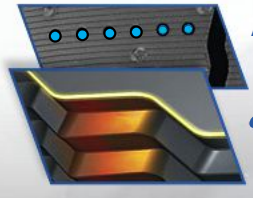

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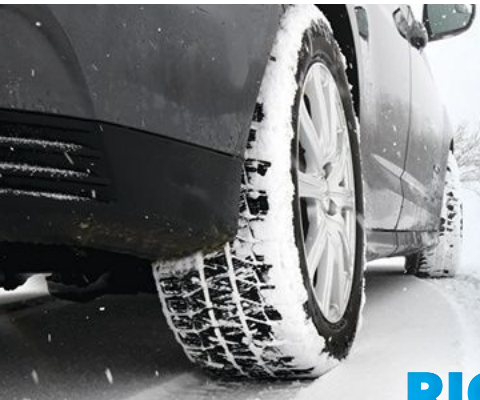

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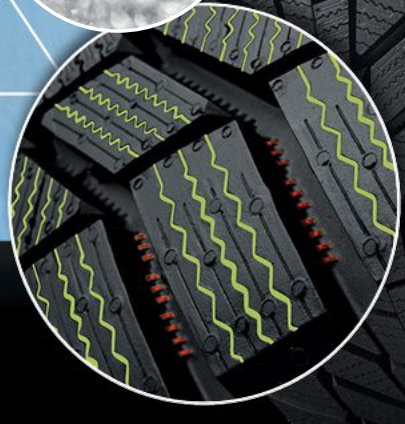

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"Such joyous little cars, exciting and rewarding and beautifully realized. The Miata, even the new RF, is pretty noisy inside, but if you care, you're looking at the wrong car."

—MIKE SUTTON, SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR

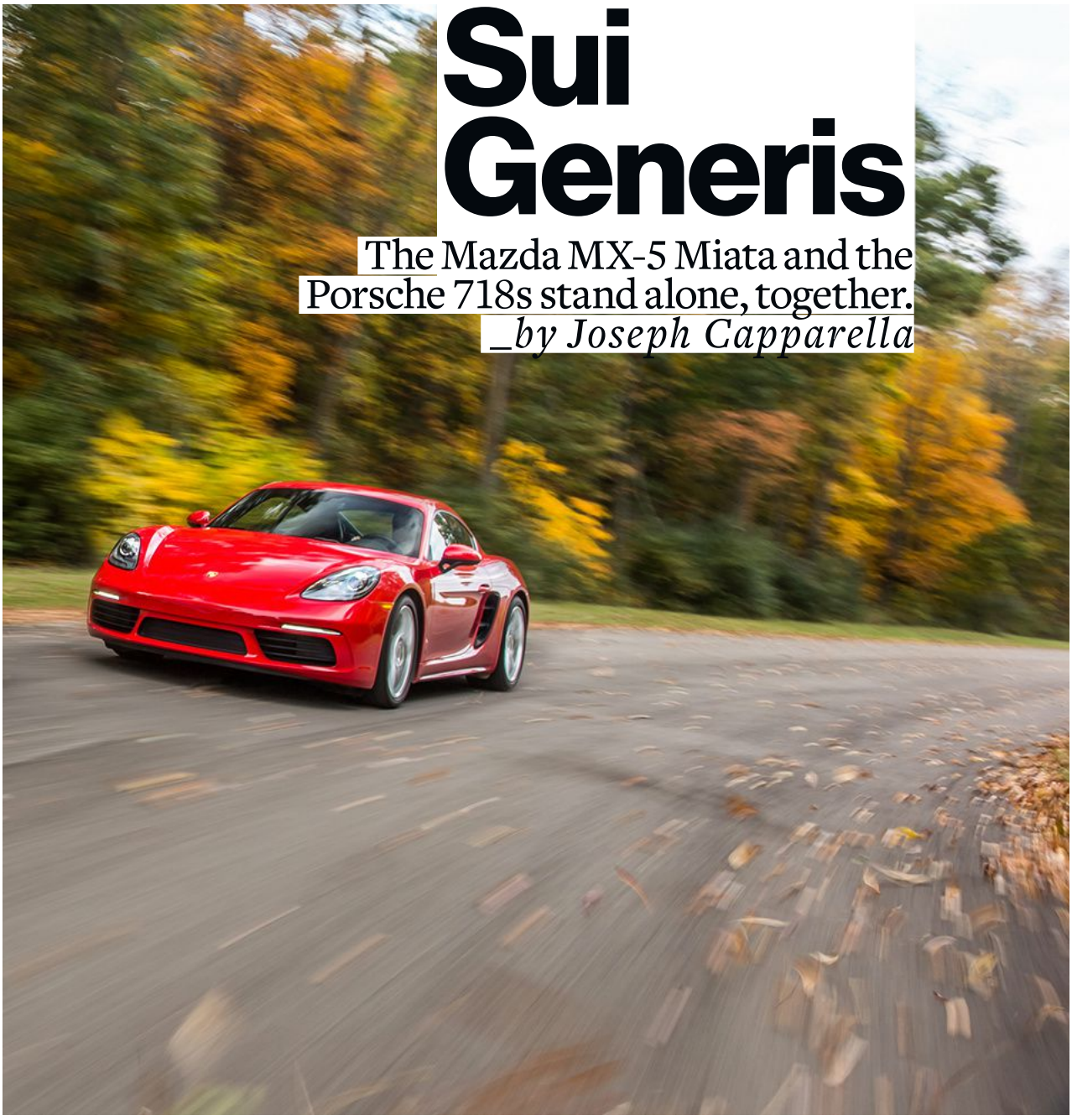
Sui Generis

The Mazda MX-5 Miata and the Porsche 718s stand alone, together.

_by Joseph Capparella

Words like "thermos," "aspirin," and "escalator," once registered trademarks, became so universal that they're now legally generic terms, which is why we don't keep our coffee hot in "vacuum flasks," take "acetylsalicylic acid" to relieve headaches, or ride up "moving staircases" at the mall. Not great for Thermos LLC, Bayer AG, or the Otis Elevator Company, but perfectly convenient for the rest of us.

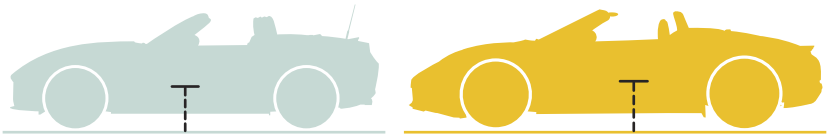
Mazda built the millionth Miata in 2016, cementing its standing as the best-selling roadster of all time. It exemplifies the roadster ideal so perfectly and singularly that it's easy to imagine the word "Miata" becoming Xerox for roadsters or fun. Just in case, Mazda already holds a trademark for the word "Roadster," as that's what the MX-5 Miata is called in its Japanese home market. Of course, there's little need these days for a generic term for a small and sporty convertible two-seater, since there aren't many left. Mazda's only direct competitor is a new entry from Fiat, but the 124 Spider is a re-engined and retuned MX-5 built by Mazda. With its own sheetmetal and a Fiat engine, the "Miat" left most editors at 10Best scratching their heads and wondering why you wouldn't just choose the original.



photography by MARC URBANO

Even in this vacuum, bereft of competition, the fourth-generation Miata is better than ever. While many cars—including several of this year's 10Best winners—use modular platforms shared across many different models, Mazda continues to engineer a rear-drive chassis specifically for the Miata. And what a chassis it is. The Miata's balance, poise, and eagerness are simply unmatched by anything that doesn't cost twice as much or more. For a small company whose full U.S. product line is otherwise front-drive based, this is an entirely irrational devotion to principle, one whose greatest benefits accrue to the Miata's enthusiastic buyers.

▼ CENTER-OF-GRAVITY HEIGHT, INCHES



MAZDA MX-5 MIATA CLUB 6-SP MAN: 18.5

PORSCHE 718 BOXSTER S PDK: 20.0

The current Miata's footprint is remarkably similar to that of the original, and, despite the addition of modern safety equipment and infotainment technology, today's car weighs only around 100 pounds more than a 1990 Miata. Even in the more stiffly damped Club version, Mazda tunes the chassis to allow for a fair amount of body roll, which enhances the sensation of load transfer and helps the car communicate its body motions and inertia to the driver. The shifter and clutch operate with impeccable fluidity and precision, and the electrically assisted steering rack, while perhaps not as lively as the previous car's hydraulic setup, is perfectly weighted and linear in its responses.

The Miata's engine is its biggest concession to economies of scale; it's similar to the Skyactiv four-cylinder in the Mazda 3, although oriented longitudinally. It sings a pleasant song and revs freely to its 6800-rpm redline, and while 155 horsepower won't impress Ford Mustang and Chevy Camaro owners, it's enough to get the MX-5 to 60 mph in under six seconds.

Really the only way to achieve similar levels of driving pleasure is to look beyond the $50,000 barrier. There, you'll find the Porsche Boxster/Cayman—or the 718, as they're called as of this year. The 718 distills a similarly pure spirit, particularly in roadster form, even as Porsche has stripped out its glorious flat-six engines in favor of turbocharged flat-fours. The Porsche costs more than twice as much as the Miata to start, a price that can be justified by its greater levels of performance and luxury. (And also because of its badge, if that sort of thing matters to you.) But Porsche's vicissitudinary pricing has caused recent Boxsters we've tested to approach six figures, far out of reach for many driving enthusiasts. The Miata, which began life as a reliable counterpart to cheap British sports cars, has now become a budget alternative to the "entry level" Porsche.

Evidence that Mazda is aware of this comes in a new Miata hardtop variant for 2017. Calling it the Miata Targa would have been an ideal descriptor, as its retractable roof operates almost identically to the newest Porsche 911 Targa's. But Porsche owns the Targa word in every sense, including legally and historically. Mazda adopted the acronym RF, meaning "Retractable Fastback." The top's dance is mesmerizing, and a crisp animated display in the RF's gauge cluster mirrors the movement in real time, lest the driver feel left out of the visual drama.

While it's not a roadster, this new variant is in every way a Miata. It shares its mechanicals with the droptop, just as the Porsche 718 Cayman coupe is a near twin of the 718 Boxster. The RF only weighs about 100 pounds more than the standard MX-5, and any dynamic differences between the two are insignificant. The RF's greatest asset is, well, its ass. The gently sloping roofline, the flying buttresses, and the rounded hips are nearly as gorgeous as the Cayman's lines and are far nicer to gaze upon than the bubble-top of the previous-generation Miata's retractable hardtop.

No matter the shape, the greatness of the Miata represents a continuing dedication to the sports-car ideal. That's a rare thing these days. Mazda, along with Porsche, somehow makes a business case for building pleasurable, desirable, and soulful vehicles, the Miata suffering not at all for its lack of competition. Both of these nameplates are winners, and both exist in a world of their own. It's a world we're glad to live in.

"The Miata RF makes an arresting visual statement–like a budget Cayman–without affecting driving one bit."
–JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR

▼

◄ *photograph by* TOM SALT ▲ *illustrations by* PETE SUCHESKI

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Love the arrows! Where's the radar? They tell me every time. A detector without the arrows is like a car without headlights.

★★★★★ *Chas S., Charlotte, NC*

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I've owned my V1 since 2001, and I've had it upgraded twice. I trust the arrows to point out every radar trap. When I know *where*, I know how to defend.

★★★★★ *Ed H., Las Vegas, NV*

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★★★★★ *Rob R., Sacramento, CA*

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★★★★★ ***Harold B., Houston, TX***

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***Uh-Oh.* V1's Radar Locator was showing two arrows, one pointing toward the trap now behind, and a second arrow ahead. The "2" on the Bogey Counter confirmed we were being double teamed.**

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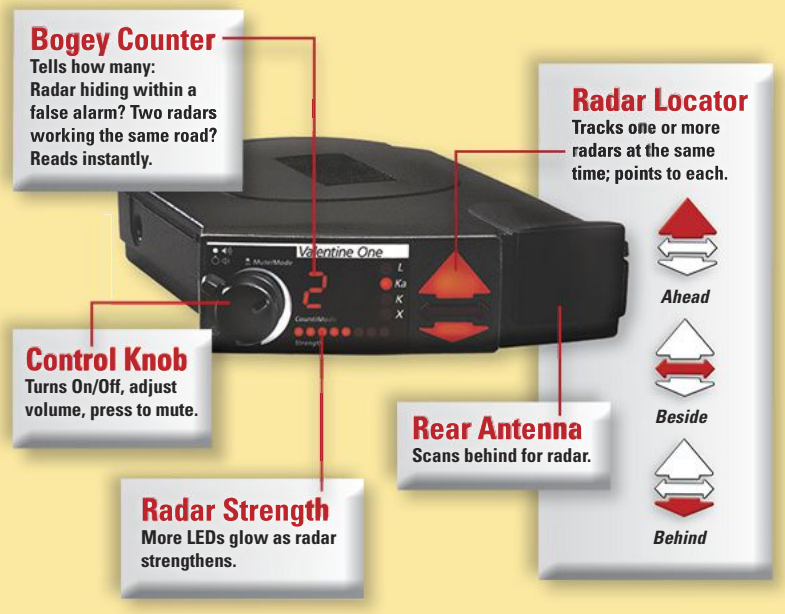

Mike Valentine
Radar Fanatic

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The End of an Era

THE SIX-CYLINDER BIG BOYS FROM CADILLAC AND GENESIS DESERVE BETTER.

_by Dave VanderWerp

"With the next generation, maybe Genesis will be there. But where is there?"
—JARED GALL, SENIOR EDITOR
"Cadillac now builds cars for Germany, not Michigan."
—K.C. COLWELL, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

The Genesis G90 and Cadillac CTS Vsport are two quite different vehicles connected by their increasingly sales-resistant sedan configuration.

The lemming-like shift in demand to crossovers—to the detriment of the previously vital sedan segment—is where all the recent growth in the U.S. auto market lies, luxury and otherwise. Through September 2016, sales for the venerable BMW 3-series were down 24 percent, and the 5-series, 18 percent. Only the recently launched 7-series is up, but that's because it's coming from an extremely low base; sales are down 30 percent compared with those of a decade ago.

At Cadillac, sales of the ATS and CTS are off by more than 14 percent. If it could take a mulligan with the capital-allocation gods, you can bet that Cadillac would swap its rear-drive ATS/CTS/CT6 sedan lineup derived from two mega-expensive, all-new platforms for equivalent crossovers. Although the CT6 has had a reasonably strong start, with 5400 sold to date, both the Escalade and the Mercedes GLS SUVs outsell it two to one. Similarly, the new Genesis-brand launch would be substantially stronger if parent Hyundai weren't leading the charge with two large sedans. Yet those boardroom decisions were made years ago, before this infatuation with lifted hatchbacks had become so clear and decisive.

So there we were at Week One of 10Best with two brand-new large luxury sedans, the not-quite-a-flagship Cadillac CT6 and the discount–S-class Genesis G90, a pair that couldn't be more different.

The G90, starting at $69,050 for our preferred 365-hp, twin-turbo 3.3-liter V-6 model, makes a spectacular first impression, a skill at which Hyundai has proven masterful but now executed at a much higher stratum. Before potential customers even leave the showroom, they'll be won over by the available and striking two-tone interior, along with a high-resolution 12.3-inch center screen, and outstanding seats that are supportive, comfortable, and comprehensively adjustable. Get out of the G90 and into an $80,085 Premium Luxury trim CT6, also with a twin-turbo V-6, as we did all week, and the Cadillac's interior materials are downright underwhelming, as were the flat and featureless seats.

Occupants might be more impressed if they could see right through the CT6 to the patented resistance spot welds joining aluminum to steel, part of the comprehensive optimization in material selection that makes the big Caddy unnaturally lightweight. Although the CT6 has a footprint smaller by 3 percent than the steel-intensive G90, it's 9 percent, or 453 pounds, lighter. And it drives like it, with unbelievable zeal and aplomb when the roads go twisty. But we were left wondering if those Nürburgring development trips were not only unnecessary but also did harm to the final ride tuning, which simply does not have the isolation befitting a large luxury sedan.

After the Week One votes were tallied, the G90 made the cut, but the CT6 didn't. During the second week, the G90 shared parking-lot space with another dynamics-first Cadillac, the three-time 10Best-winning Cadillac CTS Vsport. But familiarity breeds additional scrutiny, and although the 420-hp Vsport is as dynamically sharp as ever and remains the best-driving mid-size luxury sedan, the CTS's undersized back seat and overwrought interior also carry forward. Either model of Cadillac quickly highlighted our evaluators' least favorite things about the G90, which are its slight structural flutters on rough roads, along with a lack of damping to quell side-to-side oscillations over challenging pavement undulations. Still, we think the G90 checks more customer-pleasing boxes than does either Caddy.

In the end, many voted the CTS or G90 as their "number 11," and neither car was able to whip up enough votes to make it into the exalted 10.

▲ *photograph by* MARC URBANO

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FOURS TO BE RECKONED WITH

Though four-potted, the Porsche 718s and the Volvo S90 are exemplary in almost every way. So why do the sports cars ride so much better than the luxury car?

_by Jared Gall

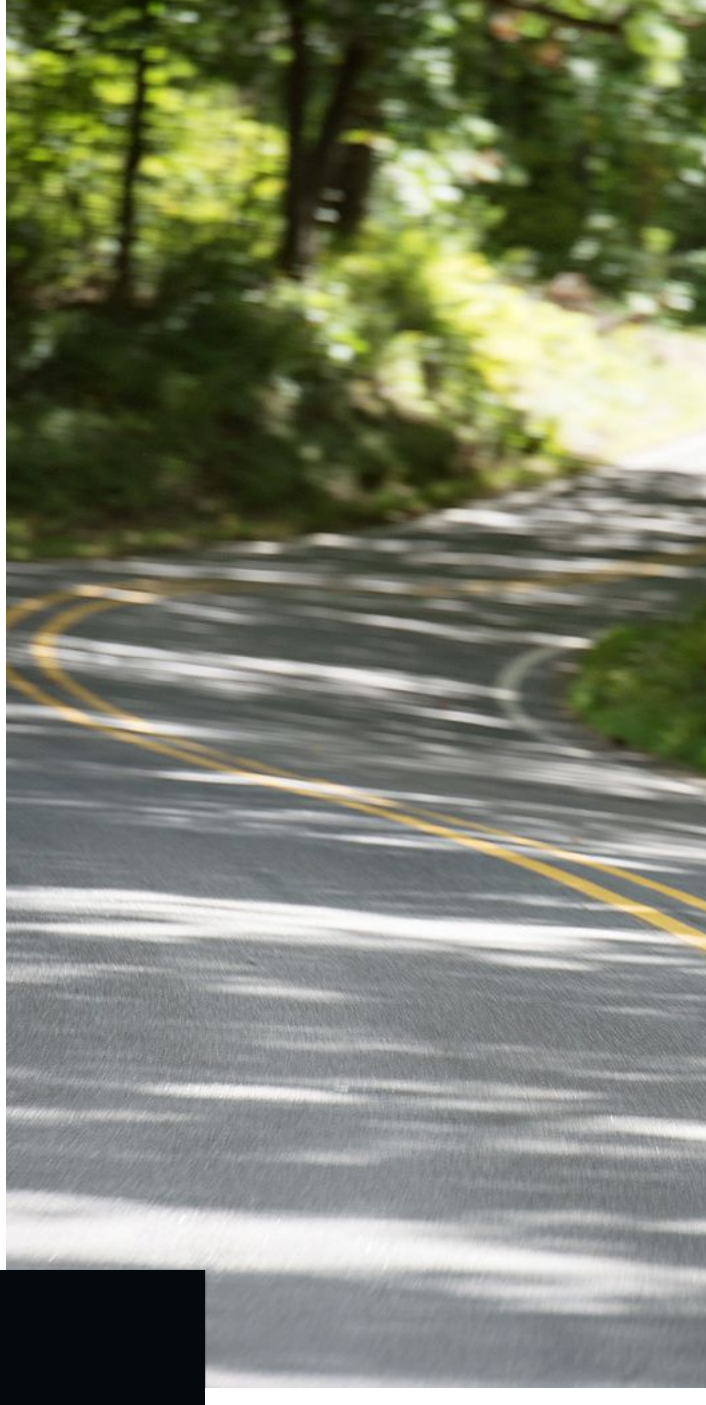
Here we have high-end indulgences that, prior to this year, would have each packed six cylinders: the Volvo's in a row and the Porsches' pancaked flat. But for economy-minded 2017, each of these half-dozens has been downsized to a third-dozen. Along with the new turbocharged flat-fours, the Porsche Boxster and Cayman get the new 718 prefix; the marketers in Stuttgart hope tying the car to historical Porsche racers lessens the sting of the two-cylinder loss. The Volvo S90, which replaces the S80 as the planet's premier Swedish sedan, is now capped at four cylinders and adds a supercharger in addition to a turbo on the highest-spec models.

The 316-hp version in the S90 T6 proves the wisdom of Volvo's high-risk approach. Supercharger grunt fills in any torque deficiency that might have existed at low rpm. Its performance is comparable to what competitors' sixes muster—if off by a tenth of a second or two in acceleration—and even under full load, the 2.0-liter never sounds much stressed by two tons of Swedish swish. Meanwhile, as much as we want to dislike the 718's new engines—and there are definitely

photograph by MARC URBANO ►

“The S90 looks fantastic. Too bad about the chassis…”

—ERIK JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE ONLINE EDITOR



aspects of them we dislike—we also like them very much. True, the loss of the stirring intake and exhaust notes is tragic, and the six's linear swell in power should be mourned (we'll take a moment of silence for that now), but life goes on.

We can't say the Porsches are better with the new engines, but they are different and perhaps equally good. That is not surprising. What is surprising is their unflappable ride. Porsche offers wheels ranging from 18 to 20 inches, as well as three suspension setups. But no matter the combination you choose, the 718 shrugs off anything it drives over or through. The S90, on the other hand, comes fitted with 20-inch Pirelli P Zeros that, while endowing this big luxury sedan with surprising grip and braking tenacity, cost it in road noise and impact harshness. If the structure were stiffer, it could've coped better with the wheels. We felt all sorts of buzz coming up through the Volvo's steering column. Astonishingly, of these vehicles, it is the 718 that rides like a luxury car. Not astonishingly, the Porsche duo makes 10Best again and we pass on the flinty Volvo.

The Boxster is also the one that delivered what a sports car should, pulling 1.04 g's on the skidpad and lapping the Nürburgring a claimed 16 seconds faster than its predecessor. For the 718, Porsche stiffened the Boxster/Cayman's rear crossmember, increasing the rigidity of the rear subframe, and then added more stiffness: firmer shocks, anti-roll bars, and springs. Porsche's superb suspension tuning lets the wheels stroke down into potholes and chatter over lumpy pavement without transmitting commensurate displacement to the body, which bobs enough to keep the driver engaged without ever flirting with abuse. To the passenger, however, the isolation from road impacts is almost complete, just as you would expect in, say, a Volvo.

The Porsches' steering, one of the great ambassadors of electrical assist, is even quicker off-center for 2017; it steals the rack from the 911 Turbo. The brakes are firm and progressive, stopping the car with astounding brevity.

With the new turbocharged fours, the 718s blow a different fanfare from their backside bugles, and they sound only a little bit like an old air-cooled Beetle. They remind us more of a Bugatti. Not in that they seem to have 16 cylinders and four turbos, but in that they sound like nothing else we've heard. There's a touch of Subaru burble at idle, but, once underway, the soundtrack morphs into a nondescript cacophony of mechanical menace and furious wind—air rushing into the engine, through the turbo, out the exhaust and the wastegate. These new fours sound like absolute brutes.

That's because they are. In ushering in the turbocharged 718 era, Porsche also closed the door on the output distinction that previously had the Cayman making marginally more power than the Boxster in every trim level. Both now generate 300 horsepower and 280 pound-feet of torque in base models and 350 horsepower and 309 pound-feet in their S versions. For the Boxster, the entry-level 2.0-liter makes 73 more pound-feet of torque than the 2.7-liter flat-six it replaces. That's an increase of 35 percent, and it peaks at 1950 rpm, more than 2500 rpm earlier. While the increase is smaller for the S models—an additional 43 pound-feet for the Boxster and 36 for the Cayman—the shift down the tach is far more dramatic, peaking at 1900 rpm now instead of 4500 in the previous six.

The base motor suffers from a fair bit of lag, in spite of some trick engine programming. Instead of closing the throttle when a driver lifts off the gas, Porsche simply cuts fuel flow. Leaving the

▼ 70-MPH CRUISE SOUND LEVEL, dBA

photography by TOM SALT

"The Porsche Boxster handles so effortlessly, it feels more like a self-driving car than the semi-autonomous ones here."
—JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR

throttle open keeps air flowing through the engine and keeps the turbo spinning, so the boost builds more quickly when you're back on the power. The problem comes at low rpm, when there's not a lot of air flowing through the engine to begin with. Two liters isn't much volume with which to generate 280 pound-feet, and when it needs 20.3 psi of boost to get there, the initial turbo spin-up takes a few too many ticks of the stopwatch. Maybe Porsche will take a lesson from Volvo and add a supercharger, too.

That wouldn't be necessary in the 2.5-liter S, which enjoys a 25-percent increase in displacement and benefits from a fast-acting variable-geometry turbocharger that only needs to generate 14.5 psi to make maximum twist. As much as any engine swap could, the upgrade to the S changes the car's character. No, the sound isn't as stirring as the old six's, but the experience is far more visceral. What used to be a lithe, graceful thing has transformed into a ferocious animal, lunging forward with an immediacy so foreign to the previous model that each would think the other's food is weird. In its quickest form—the more powerful S model with the seamless PDK automated gearbox—the Boxster hits 60 mph in just 3.6 seconds. That's nearly a full second quicker than the old six could manage. And it runs the quarter-mile in 11.9 seconds at 117 mph. It seems like only yesterday that the Chevy Corvette Z06 and the Nissan GT-R democratized 11-second quarter-miles for sub-six-figure cars, and now the Cayman and Boxster join the club. Wimpy Porsches no more.

Indeed, wimpy fours no more. The Volvo S90 and the Porsche 718s grant keen insight into the downsized future. It will not necessarily be better or worse, but it will be different. And if Porsche and Volvo stay the present course, it'll also be good. In the case of the yardstick Porsches, the newfound urgency means that we expect to see a sharp increase in mid-engined Porsches spinning off racetracks until the learning curve levels off. Supercar acceleration was never what the Boxster and Cayman were about, but this certainly kicks off an interesting new chapter in their history.

Little Feat

The Mazda 3 and the Volkswagen Golf show the Hyundai Elantra how it's done.

_by Josh Jacquot

_photography by Marc Urbano

It's the little things. The small differences. The way a shifter snaps between gears as deliberately as a steering wheel speaks of remaining grip. The way a suspension cycles at determined rates, each spring, damper, and bushing working in unison to ensure fidelity with the road. Or the way a powertrain can precisely balance acceleration, efficiency, and entertainment. These are fine points considered not in numbers but in nuance, the subtle great-making attributes that separate the merely good from the remarkable. And they're actually the reasons seemingly innocuous cars, such as the Mazda 3 and Volkswagen Golf, are repeat 10Best winners while so many worthy challengers fall short.

Though greatness is not ubiquitous among C-segment contenders, pretty-goodness is. Proficiency in the compact class has increased to the extent that standing out means achieving a level of driver engagement, style, and quality that didn't exist among economy cars a decade ago. That's the daunting mission faced by newcomers, including the 2017 Hyundai Elantra. It hardly seems fair pitting such a

"There are few cars—at any price and in any segment—that couldn't benefit from benchmarking the Golf's ride and handling."
—JARED GALL, SENIOR EDITOR
"The Mazda 3 moves with a fluidity you won't find anywhere else in this price class."
—JOSEPH CAPPARELLA, ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR

budget appliance against the 3 and the Golf. In their last two generations, this pair collected eight victories in *Car and Driver* comparison tests. When it comes to compacts, they absolutely transcend the field, even when faced with such excellent new competition as Honda's Civic.

Against established greats, such as the VW Golf and the Mazda 3, the Elantra needs to be great to succeed. We don't hand out participation trophies.

Hyundai, however, is determined to close this gap. It's thrown everything at its redesigned Elantra, which is available in three models with three different engines and four transmissions. Its refinement leaps exponentially from the previous-gen Elantra. If there's ever been a shot across the bow of the segment leaders, then this is it. But participation and most-improved trophies aren't part of the protocol here at *C/D*, and we don't hand out juice boxes and orange slices when the 10Best voting closes.

There are currently five different versions of the Golf for sale in all 50 states, a sweeping armada of excellence that includes three gas engines, front- or all-wheel drive, and wagon or hatchback body styles. Attitudes range from the save-some-fuel base Golf to the kill-some-apexes Golf R. Now in its seventh generation, the Golf's merits are best on display in our favorite variation on the theme, the GTI. It's in this form that power, economy, handling, and utility coalesce most effectively to produce a car this staff of professional critics struggled to criticize in a 40,000-mile long-term test.

Even well into its product cycle, Mazda's 3 still carries momentum in places most of its competitors can't. Refreshed for 2017, both the sedan and hatchback subtly strengthen the 3's third-generation design, which made its debut as a 2014 model. Two naturally aspirated four-cylinder engines—a 2.0-liter and a 2.5-liter—partner with the best chassis in the compact class to make a single point: The Mazda 3 is the driver's choice. Mazda forgoes a dedicated performance version, instead making every 3 a testament to the brand's wholesale devotion to the principle.

The Elantra's three-pronged attack mimics our winners in trying to offer something for everyone. The Eco sips fuel, the Sport can roast its front tires, and the all-around practical Elantra Limited . . . well, we dispensed with that snoozer during the first week. The turbocharged 1.4-liter Eco was just better in every way. The Sport, however, is the most engaging, both on paper and in practice. Equipped with a rev-happy 201-hp turbocharged 1.6-

“The Elantra is a breakthrough, but not one that hasn’t been realized dozens of times before by other manufacturers. My personal-best mile doesn’t qualify me for the Olympics.”

—JARED GALL, SENIOR EDITOR

The GTI is our favorite of the universally excellent Golf family. The Mazda 3 is tastiest in hatchback form, powered by the 184-hp 2.5-liter engine.

liter four-cylinder and a multilink rear suspension not found in the other models, the Sport is Hyundai's own GTI.

Yet hopping from the Elantra into the Mazda 3, it becomes immediately clear that no matter how much more right foot Hyundai gives you, it's not enough. Despite a horsepower deficit, the Mazda is far more fun to drive. Even faced with the Performance-package–equipped GTI's 36-hp advantage, the 3 still manages to elicit similar grins. The GTI's flood of torque, however, is undeniably rewarding. With 258 pound-feet available from the 2.0-liter turbocharged four at 1500 rpm, there's corner-exit grunt galore. The VW engine's abilities in the farther reaches of the tachometer, where it makes its 220 peak horsepower, prove that VW had more than commuting in mind during the car's development.

Yet these are, at their core, commuter-grade cars. Like the Golf and 3, even the most driver-focused Elantra doesn't sprout gratuitous wings or ducts. Eighteen-inch wheels, wider 225-series rubber, side sills, and chrome exhaust outlets give away the Sport's intentions only to those in the know. The Elantra Sport is a Hyundai that doesn't fold when pushed reasonably hard, in contrast to Hyundai's usual capable but uninvolving chassis tuning. It also sounds as if it cares and it certainly isn't slow, a substantive effort that's as rewarding at five-tenths as it is at eight-tenths.

Contrast those big-picture driving virtues with Mazda's detail engineering. Here's a company that betters its products by researching humans' sensitivity to changes in the acceleration rate. The discovery that healthy Homo sapiens move smoothly, subtly, and efficiently—without jerking, you'll notice—and that we like our cars to do the same, isn't a surprise.

What is surprising is the tech that Mazda pulls out of the effort. G-Vectoring Control, which reduces engine torque at turn-in to make driving more natural and controllable, is as minimalist an approach to technology as there's ever been. That it actually works means that the brand's minimum jerk theory is more than just fodder for middle-school jokes. What's more, this smallest of car companies builds an economy car in the 3 that welcomes left-foot braking, a driving technique ignored by some dedicated performance brands.

With its Golf, Volkswagen manages to imbue every trim level with the same understated feel, regardless of specification or price. Even the R, the 292-hp super-Golf, retains this essence; its performance is additive rather than disruptive to the base car. Volkswagen fits its lowliest Golf with only 15-inch wheels, yet such a concession doesn't manifest cheapness. All Golfs drive with a solid composure and predictability, with controlled body motions and the ride quality of a far more expensive machine. Similarly, the Mazda 3 line demonstrates control response worthy of single-purpose performance cars but does so with drop-the-kids-off livability.

Look inside, and their merits are equally vivid. In both the 3 and the Golf, everything a driver touches moves with a precision that punches above C-segment standards. Both offer well-finished stitched leather or functional fabric. Modern materials and styling combine in ways that present beautifully while begging no functional compromises. Despite the Sport's attractive stitched leather, Hyundai's finish choices across the Elantra line lack such easily recognizable material and assembly quality. The Elantra, for its part, offers controls that are first-order intuitive. The center-stack buttons, virtual or otherwise, are well prioritized to make tasks like pairing a phone or changing a station simple and rapid. For all the functionality of this vertical slab of secondary controls, however, the thoughtfully fashioned presentation of the Mazda and VW is missing.

Recognizing that Hyundai's performance model struggles to maintain pace with our favorites, some voters were eager to back the Eco as the best of the Elantras. Its 35-mpg-combined EPA rating comes with 156 pound-feet of torque and a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. That it's quicker than Hyundai's mainstream Elantra models only makes it sweeter. If fuel economy were our only concern, the Elantra Eco would top the miserly versions of the 3 and Golf.

Driving, however, still wins the day. And it's here that the Eco, like the Sport, struggles. At every trim level, the 3 and Golf are fulfilling cars to drive. Their controls are painstakingly engineered to feel precise and predictable. Their pedals return meaningful response, and their steering wheels deftly manage direction. The Elantra, by comparison, speaks in relatively muted tones. So, despite the Elantra's huge gain on our winners, it is, ironically, the little things that keep it from beating them.

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▼ PRACTICAL STORAGE
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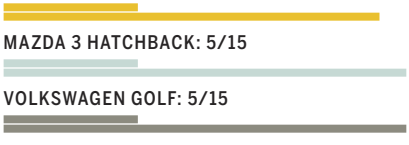

▲ *photography by* TOM SALT

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What Do We Mean by Best?

BENCHMARKING HONDA ACCORDS AND VOLKSWAGEN GOLFS. _*by Jeff Sabatini*

We have a crack copy-editing department, the best in the business, mind you, so how is it that we can have 10 "best" cars? Or for that matter, five Volkswagen Golf variants making our list? Deviant grammar aside, there's actually some logic to having a group of superlatives. Not every car can be everything to everyone. Automotive attempts at ubiquity tend to result in lowest-common-denominator products that are neither best at anything nor best for anyone. And still we recognize those machines that manage mass-market excellence: The Honda Accord has been on the 10Best list since a growing cohort of *Car and Driver* editors were mere twinkles in the eye.

Unlike comparison tests, in which we stage trials of equals, pitting 10Best challengers against our incumbents involves an intentional imbalance. We're not awarding spots based on market segment; we're sussing out transcendence. Which is why the Accord and Golf families perfectly demonstrate the three pillars of 10Best evaluation: driving engagement, value, and mission fulfillment.

Take the first, the *C/D* equivalent of "Will it blend?" We could call this "Will it accelerate, shift, turn, handle, and stop?" But that's a mouthful. Our awarded cars perform each of these individual tasks exceptionally. Yet engagement is not just a numbers evaluation. In fact, it's highly subjective. For instance, Honda, with no good reason to, offers a six-speed manual in its mid-sizer that has such a perfectly balanced shifter and delicately fluid clutch pedal that you can't help wanting to hustle it through the gears. You'll never find these virtues on a spec panel, yet they amplify the Accord's other sporting credentials, such as its near-perfect body control and sublime ride. So winners must also present a cohesive and superior Gestalt; they're the ones that tie the route together.

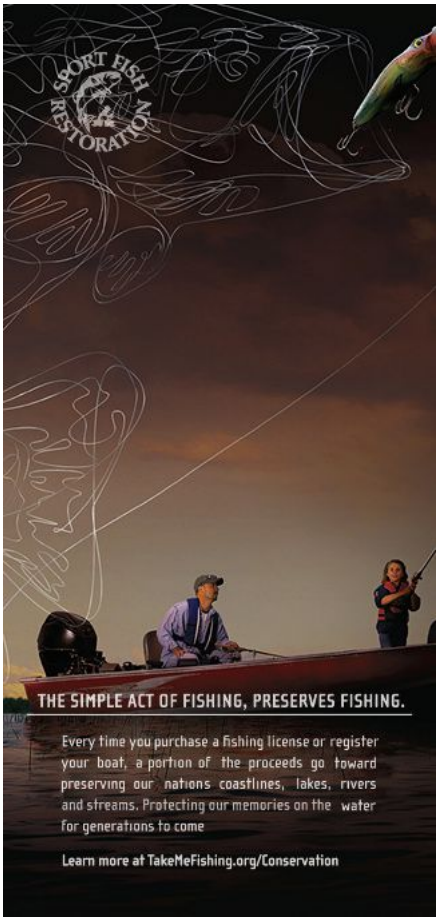
On its surface, value seems a simple calculation; a Volkswagen Golf starts at just $20,715, so where do we sign? But a Golf R is almost twice as much. Is it twice the car? Is a stripper Golf half as good as an R? Of course not. Yet no matter which of the many Golfs in the range you might pick, you'll never find one that feels cheapened or decontented to meet a price point. Each Golf is priced fairly for how it drives and performs, rather than assigned an MSRP based on what the market will bear. While we can't guarantee 10Best winners won't follow normal paths of depreciation, we don't expect owners to be as bothered by it. Reward never begets regret.

Mission fulfillment seems a litmus test. Does the car deliver on its promise? Of course it provides motorized transportation, but how well does it do everything else its buyers demand of a car in its segment? 10Besters stand proud of their competitors in meaningful ways, and not just with a laundry list of features. But this criterion also has a Rorschach quality, wherein we imagine ourselves owning and driving a 10Best winner every day. Indeed, many honorees will be invited to join our long-term fleet to endure 40,000 miles of making those perceptions reality. Both the Accord and Golf passed these tests with aplomb: The Honda is the perfect low-stress family sedan, and the VW is the paragon of hatchback efficiency and utility.

All of this is why they continue to stand as our 10Best benchmarks.

The ideals of 10Best manifest themselves in many forms, and we just can't get our fill of Golfs and Accords (except the Accord hybrid).

▲ *photograph by* MARC URBANO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"The Camaro SS 1LE is Beast Mode in automotive form."

—ERIK JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE ONLINE EDITOR

THE PRICE OF ONE

The Chevrolet Camaro faces the Mercedes-AMG C63 S coupe.

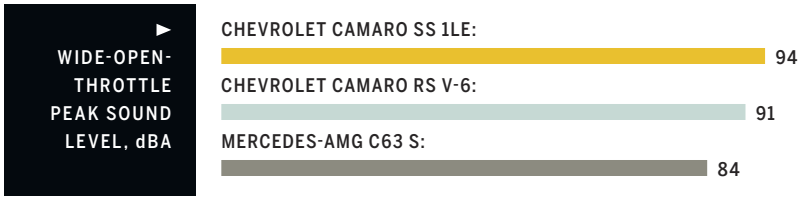
_by Daniel Pund

_photography by Tom Salt

IT MIGHT BE UNFAIR TO REFER TO THE MERCEDES-AMG C63 S COUPE AS A CHEVY CAMARO, BUT IT IS NO INSULT.

Vaunted Mercedes-Benz was building powerful, front-engined, rear-drive coupes long before 1967, when Chevrolet slapped a made-up name on its XP-836 project. Naturally, the cars produced by Mercedes-Benz had not inspired the Camaro (although the 1969 Camaro's wheel-arch eyebrows were stolen from the Mercedes 300SL Gullwing, but that's not important right now). The Mercedes coupes of the time were wafty, elegant things. The Camaro was, of course, a catch-up project aimed squarely at the Ford Mustang.

But a curious thing happened in the late '90s and early 2000s: Mercedes started producing the CLK430 and CLK55 AMG, chubby little coupes that hewed closely to the, by then, well-established muscle-pony template. The brief goes something like this: overpowered, hooligan-handling, de facto two-seaters. By the time Mercedes began building Camaros in earnest, the actual Camaro was already wear-



ing the mullet like an albatross about its neck. This did not deter the German company, which has been building them ever since. And so now we find ourselves juxtaposing the Chevy Camaro SS 1LE with the twice-as-pricey Mercedes-AMG C63 S coupe. And the Camaro is the better Camaro of the two.

At about $45K, the track-capable, new-for-2017 1LE version is within reach of most industrious individuals. That gives it a leg, a foot, a boot, and some toenail polish up on the $76-grand-to-start, but $100-thou-as-tested Mercedes. How many times through the 10Best testing weeks did we hear snippets of conversation that were some variation of "... a hundred Gs for a C-class?!" People were saying that the doughnuts we gratefully gobbled each morning of 10Best were laced with a substance that made us all hyper-suggestible to Mr. Alterman's voice as he daily reminded us of the three pillars of judging 10Best. How well does the car fulfill its mission? How fun is it to drive? And does it represent good value for the money? That last one is a bit of a sticking point here. The lavishly optioned Mercedes would have to perform heretofore unparalleled feats including, but not limited to, filling in a driver's bald spot to compensate for its $100K price tag.

It cannot do that. What the C63 S can do is whip off 3.8-second zero-to-60-mph runs, top out at 180 mph, and pull 0.98 g on the skidpad, all while convincing its driver that he is a master of all he surveys (even if he is still balding). Apart from a few makers of exotica, no other carmaker has been able to engineer such titillating exhaust notes in this new era of turbocharging. The C63 S's 503-hp twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8 is one of the modern car world's best means of torturing rear tires. And, in this case, it's bolted into a car that begs its driver to stomp on the right pedal immediately after the apex of a turn to let that engine holler as it kicks the car's tail out toward the exit. It emboldens its driver. It brings joy.

The almost identically sized Camaro nearly matches the Merc's accelerative performance. The SS 1LE bawls to 60 mph in 4.1 seconds and through the quarter in 12.4 seconds at 116 mph. It would be slightly quicker if it were equipped with the company's eight-speed automatic, but the 1LE is available only with a six-speed manual. We aren't complaining. The Camaro's big 6.2-liter V-8 is down on horsepower to the boosted Mercedes V-8, but because the Camaro's 3747-pound curb weight undercuts the C63's by 355 pounds, the two have near-identical power-to-weight ratios. And bear in mind that these are effectively the same numbers that a standard Camaro SS can achieve for as little as $38,000.

In the Bizarro World that we currently find ourselves living in, the track-capable Camaro SS 1LE rides more comfortably than the Mercedes-AMG C63 S.

What the 1LE package brings is fatter tires, bigger front brakes, and a stiffer suspension, all of which help return astounding performances on the skidpad (1.05 g's) and in the 70-to-zero braking test (141 feet). Neither the standard SS nor the C63 S can touch these numbers.

But surely this is not just about numbers. The Mercedes has to be the better car because it costs so much more, right? Well, not necessarily. Yes, the C63's interior makes the Camaro's look like Chevy contracted the fine folks at Playskool to build it. Yes, you can see out of the Mercedes more easily. And no, the Mercedes driver won't be assumed to be a mouth-breather, as some people will assume of the Camaro driver. The Mercedes driver will be subjected to entirely different insulting stereotypes.

Despite its lower mass, the Camaro's structure feels stouter than the Mercedes'. And despite the super-low-profile tires, it simply rides more comfortably than the Mercedes, which feels unyielding as it jiggles over pavement chop, never letting you forget that you bought the AMG ticket and now you must take the AMG ride. Like its less-track-focused brethren, the 1LE delivers stunningly sharp and accurate turn-in response and a level of front-end grip that belies its size. And like the other Camaro coupes, its steering is nicely weighted and accurate to a degree that those unfamiliar with the newest Camaro would simply not believe. The 1LE's electronically controlled differential and traction control mete out torque to the rear wheels in perfectly measured doses. The Mercedes does not have the same level of steering and chassis fidelity.

It's without reservation that we voted the Camaro back onto the 10Best list for 2017. Or, at least, put the V-6– and V-8–powered coupes (and their 1LE versions) on the list. The 2.0-liter turbocharged base Camaro, in its first 10Best trial, was not nearly as well received. The chassis is willing, but its turbo four has uneven power delivery and sounds tragic. It doesn't share in the award. Neither does the convertible Camaro. We tested a V-6–powered convertible that proved to be the polar opposite of the 2.0-liter coupe; a willing powertrain stymied by a soft and floppy chassis.

As for Mercedes, well, it should remember that it took Chevrolet 50 years to start making Camaros that are this good. Also, it can take solace in the fact that a Chevrolet Impala makes a pretty miserable substitute for an S-class.

"Hopefully it's the C63 that you're driving at go-directly-to-jail speeds when you finally encounter a cop, as its exterior is pretty stealthy given the monster performance."

—JOE LORIO, SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR

▲ *photograph by* A.J. MUELLER

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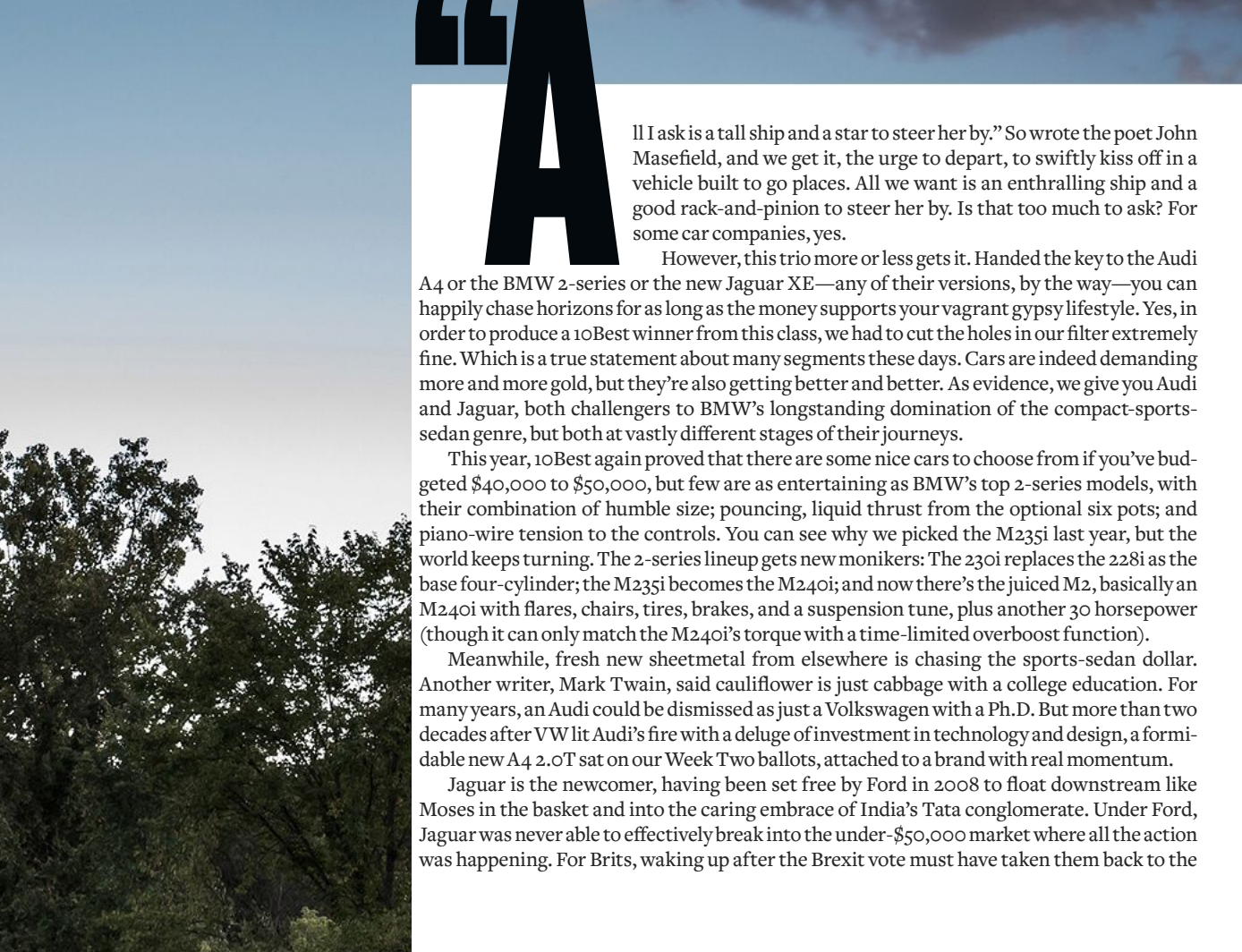
Redemption Songs

BMW's M2 and M240i coupes go up against the Audi A4 and the Jaguar XE, making up for their door deficiencies in other ways.

_by Aaron Robinson

"The XE has a nagging, unfinished feeling."
—JEFF SABATINI, FEATURES EDITOR



"All I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by." So wrote the poet John Masefield, and we get it, the urge to depart, to swiftly kiss off in a vehicle built to go places. All we want is an enthralling ship and a good rack-and-pinion to steer her by. Is that too much to ask? For some car companies, yes.

However, this trio more or less gets it. Handed the key to the Audi A4 or the BMW 2-series or the new Jaguar XE—any of their versions, by the way—you can happily chase horizons for as long as the money supports your vagrant gypsy lifestyle. Yes, in order to produce a 10Best winner from this class, we had to cut the holes in our filter extremely fine. Which is a true statement about many segments these days. Cars are indeed demanding more and more gold, but they're also getting better and better. As evidence, we give you Audi and Jaguar, both challengers to BMW's longstanding domination of the compact-sports-sedan genre, but both at vastly different stages of their journeys.

This year, 10Best again proved that there are some nice cars to choose from if you've budgeted $40,000 to $50,000, but few are as entertaining as BMW's top 2-series models, with their combination of humble size; pouncing, liquid thrust from the optional six pots; and piano-wire tension to the controls. You can see why we picked the M235i last year, but the world keeps turning. The 2-series lineup gets new monikers: The 230i replaces the 228i as the base four-cylinder; the M235i becomes the M240i; and now there's the juiced M2, basically an M240i with flares, chairs, tires, brakes, and a suspension tune, plus another 30 horsepower (though it can only match the M240i's torque with a time-limited overboost function).

Meanwhile, fresh new sheetmetal from elsewhere is chasing the sports-sedan dollar. Another writer, Mark Twain, said cauliflower is just cabbage with a college education. For many years, an Audi could be dismissed as just a Volkswagen with a Ph.D. But more than two decades after VW lit Audi's fire with a deluge of investment in technology and design, a formidable new A4 2.0T sat on our Week Two ballots, attached to a brand with real momentum.

Jaguar is the newcomer, having been set free by Ford in 2008 to float downstream like Moses in the basket and into the caring embrace of India's Tata conglomerate. Under Ford, Jaguar was never able to effectively break into the under-$50,000 market where all the action was happening. For Brits, waking up after the Brexit vote must have taken them back to the

"Proficient and bloodless, the A4 is a cyborg's idea of a luxury sports sedan."
—DANIEL PUND, DEPUTY EDITOR

▲ *photograph by* MARC URBANO

day they woke up to find an X-type parked in the driveway. Lots of precious time was lost while Jaguar continued to gasp on the sales of its expensive ingots of tweedy British snobbery, steadfastly refusing to take seriously the youth movement in the luxury market that was passing it by.

Jaguar strives to give buyers choice in its first real compact sports sedan, the XE. There are three engines, including a diesel; the option of rear- or all-wheel drive; and a variety of trim levels and options that start in the heart of the market at $35,895 and range up to the snorty R-Sport, the prices easily jumping back over the $50,000 mark where Jag has always seemed more comfortable.

The 2.0-liter diesel and the 3.0-liter supercharged V-6 XEs showed up at 10Best while the turbocharged four-cylinder gas engine did not. We also had the new XF, the middle sedan between the XE and the slinky and sadly too-rare XJ, and were struck by how similar the styling is. Instead of presenting something new in the XE, Jaguar's designers seem to have just shaved off a few inches from the XF. Jag needs a cymbal crash to announce its rebirth to younger buyers unaccustomed to seeing the leaper offered at affordable lease rates. Yet the XE is two pillows banging together.

We found no real fresh thinking in the XE's interior, either, about which several voters complained of cramped packaging. The orderly layout of the buttons, gauges, and de rigueur infotainment screen—much improved from previous generations but prone to freezing up in our cars and still lacking a console master-control knob—is convenient enough. But the near universality of black molded plastic and black leather makes for an interior that looks like one big lava flow that froze in 2006.

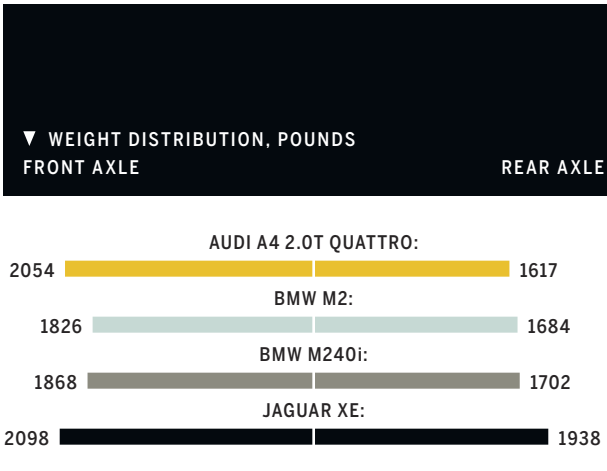
Compare the XE's dark, dull, pro-forma cabin with either the BMW 2's classically technical cockpit or the Audi A4's, an altogether more exciting—and more spacious—place to do business. The future is being imagined in the Audi as a harmony between the digital and the analog, the instruments a large, configurable TFT screen able to show car information, various menus, or a giant map. Yet it still feels as if you're piloting a car, not an iPad. It's brighter and livelier than the Jag even if you choose black, having as it does swaths of silvery trim that make it less like working at a coal face. With a luxury sports sedan, it's not just about the dynamics.

Even so, the Audi, with the 2.0-liter turbo four, the only engine available this year, moves with a silky grace and balletic control of its motions, the miles dispensed with cool proficiency if not much drama. The mostly aluminum Jag, and especially the 340-hp "35t," works harder to make a show, exhibiting faster steering once turned off its significant center dead spot, a pronounced if not entirely exquisite roar from the engine (hey, it's a V-6), and a hearty appetite for hard corners.

Of the Audi, editors said they wished it had more driving character. It seals you up and sends you on your way, but it doesn't thrill. Of the Jag, they wished it had more refinement and fresh thinking. Road noise and rattles were cited, as were frustrations with the fritzy InControl entertainment apps. Meanwhile, the M240i stood out, like the M235i last year, as an enormously athletic and capable little torpedo that romps around our test loop making joyous (and electronically augmented) sound and, in traffic, turns you into a stereotypical BMW schmuck in about 15 minutes. BMW drivers aren't born, they're made by cars like this, cars that encourage you to thrust and slash gleefully through the herds of plodding sheep.

The M240i has a sporting suspension, but it won't liberate any loose dentistry. The rigid M2 will, this extremist shaking our fillings over the rougher sections as the steering sniffed feverishly for apexes. The M2 prefers corners to straights the same way a German shepherd prefers pork chops to applesauce, but that's part of its hyperactive charm. Cars like the M2 form the radioactive core of BMW's performance credibility, and the M240i backs off just

▼ WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION, POUNDS



"The M2 is what the M3 used to be. I want one."
—JOSH JACQUOT, REVIEWS EDITOR

enough to please drivers who find it a little too hot at the center.

Thus, in our little Goldilocks scenario, in which all the chairs were tried, the adoration inevitably fell back on the BMW. Not the 3-series, which has grown too large and too mainstream to any longer earn our passion, but the smaller 2-series, which is just under a foot shorter than an A4 and reminds us of E30s and E46s and the Way Things Used to Be. BMW is at heart a small-vehicle company, a course set in 1959 when Herbert Quandt saved the ailing maker of princely handmade bolides and diverted its resources into the 1961 1500, instantly creating the market for compact sports sedans.

And oh, how BMW squanders an opportunity by giving us only a two-door 2-series. Just imagine a sedan and a wagon to choose from on this platform, with the same delightful cockpit and controls. Yes, small, but many things are shrinking these days (even SUVs), and BMW should follow, giving us at least one full product line in the catalog that plucks the same heartstring as that original 1500.

Well, that's idle dreaming. At sunrise on the day after 10Best, here's where the votes piled up: on the M240i, a small car hugging tight a 335-hp turbo inline-six, and the M2, the same vehicle but with all slack drawn out of the suspension and steering. The cars may be small, but the prices are mighty; the M240i starts at $45,445, and the only color that isn't a $700 option is white. The M2 begins at $52,695, again, white-only if you don't want to pay extra. If you wish to celebrate BMW's small-car heritage and expertise, BMW makes you pay dearly—indeed, bleeds you white.

But people will pay it. There are no comparable options because the industry has largely abandoned to front-drive platforms buyers of compact sports sedans who wish to drive a compact. To accept a 2-series into your life, you have to want small—not Mini-Cooper–snug but what was considered mid-size only a couple generations ago—and be willing to live with two doors and the fumble-bum way they make you squeeze into the teensy back seat. Plus that price. It's a lot to ask, we know, but if you need to get away in a ship that steers like a star, this is your car.

▲ *photograph by* TOM SALT

THE 10BEST C

With the battles over, the votes tallied, and the staff exhausted, these 10 models emerge victorious.

ARS FOR 2017

▲ *photograph by* ANDREW TRAHAN

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SUPER COUPON

40 PIECE 1/4" AND 3/8" DRIVE SOCKET SET

SAVE 60%

PITTSBURGH
- SAE and Metric

ITEM 63015
61328/62843
47902 shown

Customer Rating

$3.99
~~$4.99~~ comp at $9.99

66296130

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SUPER COUPON

NEW

29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED HIGH SPEED STEEL DRILL BIT SET

WARRIOR

SAVE 78%

Customer Rating

ITEM 62281
61637 shown

$12.99
~~$19.99~~ comp at $59.97

64988311

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SUPER COUPON

1.5 HP ELECTRIC POLE SAW

SAVE $34

PORTLAND.
- Extends from 6 ft. to 8 ft. 10"

Customer Rating

ITEM 68862/63190
62896 shown

$64.99
~~$84.99~~ comp at $99

65052286

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WOW SUPER COUPON

TILTING FLAT PANEL TV MOUNT

Customer Rating

ITEM 62289
61807 shown

Fits flat screen TVs from 37" to 70".
- 176 lb. capacity

$19.99
SAVE 65% ~~$29.99~~ comp at $57.37

64996528

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SUPER COUPON

1195 LB. CAPACITY 4 FT. x 8 FT. FOLDABLE HEAVY DUTY TRAILER

Customer Rating

Haul Master

ITEM 62648
62666
90154 shown
- DOT certified tires

SAVE $170

$259.99
~~$299.99~~ comp at $429.99

650294 26

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Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Parking Lot Sale item, automotive lifts, compressors, floor jacks, saw mills, storage cabinets, chests or carts, trailers, trenchers, welders, Admiral, Badland, Bremen, CoverPro, Creekstone, Daytona, Diablo, Doyle, Drummond, Earthquake, Franklin, Hercules, Holt, Jupiter, Lynxx, Maddox, Portland, Predator, Quinn, StormCat, Union, Viking. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17.

64999098

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SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR GENERATORS

8750 PEAK/ 7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS

SUPER QUIET

ITEM 68530/63086/63085/69671 shown
ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088
CALIFORNIA ONLY

- 76 dB Noise Level

Wheel kit and battery sold separately.

Customer Rating

$529.99 ~~$599.99~~ comp at $999

662962 79

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SUPER COUPON

US★GENERAL PRO

26", 16 DRAWER ROLLER CABINET

ITEM 61609/67831 shown

Customer Rating

- 1060 lb. capacity
- 14,600 cu. in. of storage

SAVE $633

$319.99
~~$369.99~~ comp at $952.99

66297019

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SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY

ITEM 63054/60728/69034/62858 shown

NEW

SAVE $106

COVERPRO

Customer Rating

$99.99 ~~$149.99~~ comp at $205.99

64988773

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SUPER COUPON

BADLAND

Customer Rating

2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL

ITEM 61258 shown
61840/61297/68146

SAVE $105

$54.99 ~~$89.99~~ comp at $159.99

66300913

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SUPER COUPON

9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

PITTSBURGH

SAE
ITEM 69043/63282/42304 shown

SAVE 70%

METRIC
ITEM 42305/69044/63171

Customer Rating

YOUR CHOICE $5.99
~~$8.99~~ comp at $19.97

65063532

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SUPER COUPON

RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL WITH 3/8" x 50 FT. HOSE

ITEM 93897 shown
69265/62344

Customer Rating

SAVE $129

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC

$59.99
~~$89.99~~ comp at $189

66294432

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SUPER COUPON

MOVER'S DOLLY

ITEM 60497/93888 shown
61899/62399/63095/63096
63098/63097

Haul Master

Customer Rating

- 1000 lb. capacity

SAVE 59%

$7.99
~~$19.99~~ comp at $19.97

65060542

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SUPER COUPON

12" SLIDING COMPOUND DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW WITH LASER GUIDE

Customer Rating

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

SAVE $259

ITEM 69684 shown
61969/61970

$139.99
~~$199.99~~ comp at $399

65048948

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WOW SUPER COUPON

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK

ITEM 62530/62248/68052 shown
- 3-1/2 Pumps Lifts Most Vehicles

Customer Rating

SAVE $80
- Weighs 56 lbs.

$169.99
~~$179.99~~ comp at $249.99

65005682

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SUPER COUPON

1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572°/1112°)

drillmaster

ITEM 62340/62546
63104/96289 shown

SAVE 71%

Customer Rating

$8.99
~~$14.99~~ comp at $31.47

65033120

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 66%

130 PIECE TOOL KIT WITH CASE

Customer Rating ★★★★½

PITTSBURGH

ITEM 63091/69331
63248/68998 shown

- Hammer, screwdrivers and driver bits, wrenches and socket set
- Pliers, cutters and locking pliers
- Tape measure, utility knife, hex wrenches, precision screwdrivers
- Commonly used fasteners and anchors
- Blow mold storage case

$29.99
comp at $39.99 $89.98

66364939

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SUPER COUPON

FREE WITH ANY PURCHASE CENTECH. 7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER

ITEM 90899 shown
98025/69096

$16.45 VALUE

LIMIT 1 - Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or prior purchase. Coupon good at our stores, HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Offer good while supplies last. Shipping & Handling charges may apply if not picked up in-store. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one FREE GIFT coupon per customer per day.

66364891

SUPER COUPON — SAVE 41%

2 PIECE VEHICLE WHEEL DOLLIES

Customer Rating ★★★★½

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

ITEM 60343
67338 shown

- 1500 lb. capacity

$49.99
comp at $59.99 $85.99

66392896

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 65%

MULTI-USE TRANSFER PUMP

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

ITEM 62961/63144/61364/66418 shown

Customer Rating ★★★★½

$4.99
comp at $6.99 $14.37

66355214

LIMIT 9 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON — SAVE 59%

3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS AIR COMPRESSORS

A. HOT DOG
ITEM 69269/97080 shown

B. PANCAKE
ITEM 95275 shown
60637/61615

Customer Rating ★★★½☆

YOUR CHOICE
$39.99
comp at $59.99 $98.62

66317391

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 60%

WIRELESS SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM

Bunker Hill Security

ITEM 93068 shown
69590/61910/62447

Customer Rating ★★★★½

$11.99
comp at $16.99 $29.99

66359544

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE $135

2.4" COLOR LCD DIGITAL INSPECTION CAMERA

ITEM 61839
62359 shown

CENTECH.

$69.99 comp at $79.99 $205.75

Customer Rating ★★★★½

Includes hook, mirror, magnet accessories, and video-out cable.

66319721

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WOW SUPER COUPON — SAVE 50%

PNEUMATIC ADJUSTABLE ROLLER SEAT

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

- 300 lb. capacity

Customer Rating ★★★★½

ITEM 46319 shown
61160/61896

$19.99
comp at $27.99 $39.99

66366768

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 57%

4 PIECE 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWNS

ITEM 63056/63057/60405/63094
63150/61524/62322/90984 shown

Customer Rating ★★★★½

Haul Master

$7.99
comp at $12.99 $18.85

66357330

LIMIT 9 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON — SAVE 62%

POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES

Customer Rating ★★★★★

HARDY PACK OF 100

Item 68498 shown

- 5 mil thickness

SIZE	ITEM
MED	68496/61363
LG	68497/61360
X-LG	68498/61359

YOUR CHOICE
$5.99
comp at $7.99 $15.99

66311461

LIMIT 7 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON — SAVE $60

440 LB. CAPACITY ELECTRIC HOIST

Customer Rating ★★★★½

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

ITEM 62767
60346 shown

- With Remote Control

$89.99
comp at $99.99 $149.99

66341873

LIMIT 3 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON — SAVE 65%

18 VOLT CORDLESS 3/8" DRILL/DRIVER WITH KEYLESS CHUCK

ITEM 69651/62868
62873/68239 shown

drill master

Includes one 18V NiCd battery and charger.

Customer Rating ★★★★½

$16.99
comp at $19.99 $49.21

66373056

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 75%

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE LOW-PROFILE CREEPER

- 300 lb. capacity

ITEM 69262
69094/61916
2745 shown

Customer Rating ★★★½☆

$19.99
comp at $27.99 $79.99

Tools sold separately.

66375374

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SUPER COUPON — SAVE 64%

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP

ITEM 69249/69115/69137
69129/69121/877 shown

$2.99
comp at $4.99 $8.48

Customer Rating ★★★★½

66371003

LIMIT 6 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 4/6/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON — SAVE 85%

12" RATCHET BAR CLAMP/SPREADER

PITTSBURGH

ITEM 46807/68975
69221/62123/63017
69222 shown

$2.99
comp at $3.99 $20.76

66376118

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What I'd Do Differently
Fake Elon Musk, not 45

Fake Elon Musk isn't pioneering rocketry, solar energy, battery storage, or EVs. He doesn't want to save humanity by seeding the galaxy with our species.

► *interview by* JOHN PEARLEY HUFFMAN

C/D: ***Why are you so smart?***

FEM: Well, in order to achieve a certain resonance between the two hemispheres of a brain, one needs a cacophonous harmony that transcends the bifurcation of task-oriented lobes. The distinction between parietal and occipital is in fact artificial, and I concentrate my brain activity and neuron engagement in the empty space between them. By activating that unused void, I unleash potentialities that, otherwise, would decay into aggregate average-ness.

■ ***So is your priority to get to Mars or to build a viable autonomous vehicle?***

☐ I suppose that they're not really mutually exclusive goals, are they? If things go according to plan, we can have an autonomous, all-electric car in production by 2014, maybe 2015 at the latest. Now I'm considering that it may not be necessary to go to Mars, but we could bring Mars here instead.

■ ***You realize that it's 2017?***

☐ Do not persist in outdated linear projections of time. I see a clear path to get there.

■ ***With the rise of automation in cars, will there still be room in the future to have fun driving?***

☐ Fun is a fungible concept that can be applied to automobiles in several distinct cognitive disciplines. Working as an intellectually abstract concept, the sensation of speed may be replaced with the confluent challenges of conceiving and perfecting algorithms that simulate ideal operation of vehicles under multiple transient conditions. And simulations don't require physical existence to be evaluated. So if you like optimizing algorithms in diverse virtual environments—and I certainly do—driving in the future will be more fun than ever. At least in that particular aspect of fun as it exists. That is, if there is an objective existence at all. Maybe we're in a simulation right now.

■ ***That's fun?***

☐ If a compact, efficient, and elegant algorithm isn't spine-tingling, then nothing is.

■ ***You're a notorious optimist, but what could go wrong?***

☐ Artificial intelligence is a term that will eventually fade away as we recognize that machine intelligence is increasingly indistinguishable from biological intelligence. But not all possible AI futures are benign, and it's important that they be benign. For instance, what happens if an autonomous car decides that it's not in its own best interest to accurately report an incident? How do we prevent machines from developing a sense of self-preservation? What if they develop obsessions that overwhelm humanity? I fear robots. And zombies.

■ ***Are you in a hurry?***

☐ I work with a high sense of urgency. We need to implant humanity on Mars. Now. We need to achieve energy sustainability. Now. We need a more logical transportation system. Now. And we need a dessert topping that's low calorie and tastes terrific. Well, soon.

■ ***Batteries for electric vehicles are still expensive and still enormous. Will that change soon?***

☐ Of course it will change. In the near term, that means managing the movement of ions from the lithium cobalt oxide across the electrolyte to the graphite anode. But in the longer term, I want to leverage the existence of voids. That is, moving electrons through the nothingness that must exist in between the component parts of atoms. Surely it will be more efficient to move through voids than through any substance. So, I believe there is a big future in nothing.

■ ***Does the internal-combustion engine still offer any advantage over an electric?***

☐ As a former McLaren F1 owner, I know how exciting a hydrocarbon-consuming engine can be. It's the roar of thousands of controlled explosions; the surge of torque as the engine accelerates toward the meatiest part of its power production; the sheer madness of trying to control something so overwhelming without any electronic mediation. Like flying one of my rockets, it's kind of primal and dreamlike when a great internal-combustion engine is ignited and set loose. It's simply one of those things that can make you feel like a total badass. Beyond that, it takes only five minutes to refuel. You know, maybe I'm in the wrong business and my life is one long mistake . . . nah, I'm cool.

■ ***Where do you like to eat?***

☐ Olive Garden and sometimes Red Lobster.

■ ***Is there anything you'd have done differently?***

☐ This kind of goes back to my answer to your first question. The future only gets better when smart people work at it. Entropy is not on your side. So, eventually, I need to work toward reordering the universe into a more stable state so that it can persist. I should already be working on that, because the laws of physics will be a challenge to rewrite. But I can see a clear path to get there.

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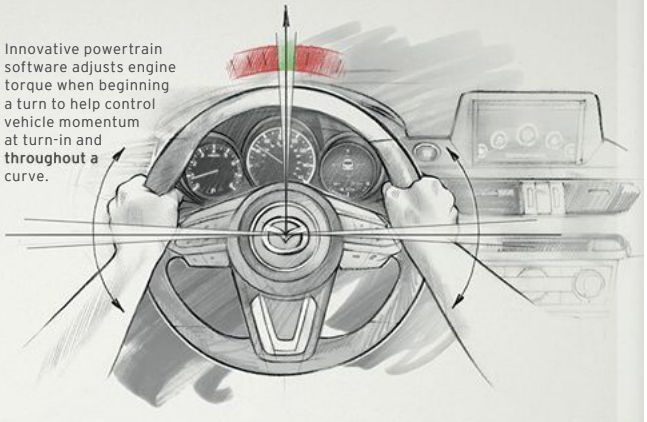
illustration by FLORIAN NICOLLE

THE NEW MAZDA6 WITH SKYACTIV-VEHICLE DYNAMICS

Without even noticing, you make countless steering adjustments. Mile after mile. Curve after curve. It happens in every car. But unlike other cars, the new Mazda6 features SKYACTIV-VEHICLE DYNAMICS with G-Vectoring Control to help make endless steering adjustments a thing of the past. This revolutionary technology helps control vehicle momentum using minute and immediate adjustments to engine torque with each new turn. This torque alteration allows the car to load the front tires with additional force. The result? The Mazda6 feels like an extension of you. Giving you a feeling of better control and less fatigue. So both you and your passengers enjoy a better ride. Which is a very big deal indeed.



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